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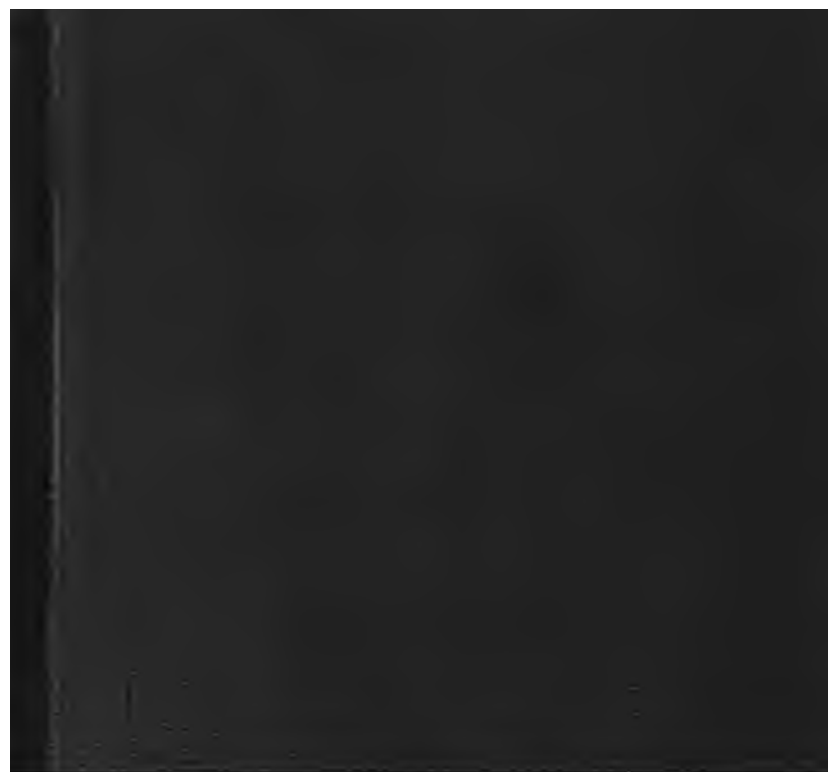
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250 . f. 129.

THE LIFE OF DR. JOHNSON



THE LIFE OF DR. JOHNSON

THE LAW OF DIVORCE.

CHAPTER I.

The fruitless showers of worldly woe
Fall dark to earth, and never rise;
But tears that from repentance flow,
In bright exhalament reach the skies.

Moore's Sacred Melodies.

It may be well to advertise my readers, at the very commencement of our acquaintance, that the story which I am about to relate is a peculiar one; that to many it may appear at the first improbable, and to some few, perhaps, to lie even

beyond the limits of possibility. But if, in spite of such appearances, they will patiently follow the thread of my narrative, keeping steadily in view the character of the most prominent actor, and the conflicting influences which were the arbiters of his conduct,—if they will reflect also on the various and strange contingencies which are possible under the law of divorce, I am persuaded that they will arrive at a more favourable conclusion as to the truthfulness of the scenes which I shall endeavour to describe.

The hero of my tale, then,—if hero he can be called,—Roland Elsmere, was a man of good fortune and family who, at an early age, had married a very young and beautiful and fascinating girl. With naturally good dispositions, she united the misfortune of a neglected moral education. Her parents died when she was an infant, and had left her to the care of guardians, whose only concern was to procure her expensive accomplishments. Even her little caprices, however, and her coquetry and wilfulness, had

charms for her husband, and rendered her in his eyes more *naïve* and bewitching. He was almost ready to say, with the Frenchman, *Je t'adore, surtout à cause de tes imperfections*. They were like children—adult children—together. Each was the other's playfellow, each the other's pastime. The days they spent in mutual intercourse were never too long. To shorten their hours would have been to curtail their happiness: life and enjoyment were one. Fortune smiled, the heavens smiled, the earth was all smiles around them; and smiling and smiled upon were all their friends and neighbours, whether rich or poor. All the charms so peculiar to an English country residence were united in theirs; and as they drove or walked through the beautiful domain, even their irrational dependants, the faithful dogs, the petted steeds, the sleek kine and the timorous sheep, seemed to look toward them as a centre of attraction, and to be conscious of something agreeable in their presence. To crown their felicity, two children were born to them, and filled their home wit

promises of future and increasing delight. Such was the morning of their married life; but its evening closed in shades dismally dark.

Roland Elsmere had been obliged to leave England and his family, and to remain several weeks at Vienna, on a mission connected with the English embassy in that capital. The period of his banishment from his beloved Harriet was fast drawing to a close, and in a few days he hoped to be hastening towards her sweet and enchanting presence, as fast as steam could propel, and breezes waft him. In a few days he looked forward to sauntering with her through the groves of Flosdale, and to rambling with her amid the golden furze, and over the thymy heather of the adjacent hills. In a few days he anticipated the delight of dancing his little ones on his knees, and reveling in the enjoyment of their infantile graces.

It was just at this moment that a letter reached him, which occasioned the most poignant and bewildering anguish. It altered the entire prospect of the future, enveloped him in

dark and impenetrable clouds, and from a height of joy and gladness plunged him into an abyss of misery. It informed him that Mrs. Elsmere had abandoned her home and her children, and had eloped with one of the friends of his childhood, who used to visit at Flosdale for a month at a time, and had been unto him as a brother. They had sat together on the same form at Rugby; they travelled with the same private tutor in a pedestrian tour through Sweden; they matriculated at the same college in Cambridge, pulled in the same boat-crew, joined in giving wine-parties, and crammed for their examinations by the same midnight lamp.

Such was their intimacy,—such were the hands from which Roland Elsmere received the most deadly of wounds.

When the first stun of agony had subsided, his spirit turned towards revenge. ‘I will pursue the traitorous wretch,’ he thought, ‘to his hiding place, and will slay him at her feet!’ It was but a thought, for he felt immediately that

such an act would be murder, or manslaughter at the least.

"I will go," he said, "and provoke him to fight. But—no! how absurd to put the miscreant who has plundered me of my all on even ground with myself, and with equal chance of success."

Firmness was not the characteristic of Roland's mind. One vindictive project after another was rejected, until at last he formed a determination to sue for a divorce, get his marriage with his false Harriet annulled, and then marry anew.

He hastened to London. His days were passed with lawyers and counsel ; the action was commenced ; the infidelity of Mrs. Elsmere was easily proved. The divorce was granted, and each of the divorced was, according to the law of England, free to form another alliance.

Within two years after, Roland Elsmere was married again. His marriage was solemnized in Paris, according to the forms of the Church of England, and in the presence of the English am-

bassador. His bride was Catherine Dashton. She was rich, handsome, and cold-hearted, and brought him nothing but increase of sorrow. He had seen little of her, and that chiefly in the company of others, and in the midst of those scenes of gaiety in which the genuine temper and disposition is rarely displayed. He married her in haste: he repented at leisure. In spite of his anger and resentment, his heart was still with Harriet, and he would have given worlds to be able to embrace her again as his wife. She knew not of his recent alliance, which had not been contracted a fortnight, before he received from her the following harrowing epistle.

“MY DEAREST HUSBAND,

“If my heart could weep, this letter would be written, not in ink, but in tears of blood. No tongue can describe the bitterness of my sorrow. Every night I water my couch with tears, and when I wake in the morning I wake to weep. Thick clouds encompass my path, and I walk beneath an intolerable burden. Your

image, my beloved—my injured—deeply injured Roland, yours, and that of my sweet, innocent babes, are continually before me. They haunt my very dreams; they gaze on me reproachfully; they fill me with confusion and shame. Never, since I left my home—my happy home!—have I had one moment's peace. In the midst of forced and hollow gaiety, a worm was gnawing the core of my life; conscience had become my torturer, and my solitude was peopled with avenging furies. The new position into which I had thrown myself very soon excited my infinite disgust; but alas! when one has plunged into a wrong and guilty course, how difficult it is to break through its entanglements! There are circumstances in which sin appears to be one's destiny, and in which it seems hopeless to struggle against one's fate; and such were mine. But I have now at least broken the hateful spell, the execrable bonds. I have retired into lodgings in London, where, of all places, one can be most solitary; and I see nobody but my loving sister, who has consented to stay with me in my

lonely affliction and remorse. I dare not look any one in the face; I am emaciated with grief. My head throbs, my appetite fails, my knees sink; and if—which God in mercy forbid!—you still repudiate me as I have deserved, I shall die the victim of my inconstancy—I shall die of a broken heart!

“But oh! my kind, my indulgent husband, is all hope of my recovery lost? Am I not, though fallen, still your wife—still your own—your very own Harriet? Is not the bond which unites us indissoluble even by my fault? Was it not contracted at the altar ‘till *death* us do part?’ It is true you have obtained a divorce from me; but think me not audacious, my precious Roland; pity me, pardon me, when I say *that* holds good in law only, and not in nature and religion. Will you be more obdurate than He who suffered the Magdalen to approach Him, and to wash his feet with penitential tears? Will you be more inexorable than the God-man, who, to a sinner like myself, said: ‘Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more!’ True—too true, alas!—

I have tarnished your name, and dishonoured your house; but, oh! my well beloved, the world is wide; let us sail to some far-off land, to some sunny climate such as you love, and there begin our married life anew. There let me retrieve the past, so far as it can ever be retrieved. No dangers will affright me, no labours will fatigue me, no hardships disgust me, no trials overwhelm me, if I can but minister at your side, in health or in sickness, and lay my weary head once more on the bosom which I have disquieted and torn. Let me fulfil the sacred duties of a mother. Let me teach my sweet children from their early years what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God. Let my darlings, at least, grow up in happy ignorance of their mother's fault; let them live under the delusion of thinking that she who bore them has always been worthy of their respect and love. Write to me, dearest Roland; speak to me but one word; rebuke me rather than be speechless; reproach me, and I will not reply. Your silence is my sorest punishment. Revive me with one ray of hope.

Life and death hang on your words. Forgive me, and I shall love you more than I ever did, because you have forgiven your henceforward unalterably devoted, and deeply repentant wife,

“HARRIET ELSMERE.”

This outpouring of a penitent heart overwhelmed Roland with profound and indescribable emotion. It was manifestly genuine. Nature's self had stamped it as sincere, and, strange to say, he felt disposed to comply with the extraordinary request which it contained. His case was an uncommon one, it is true, but not unexampled. There have been such instances already, and such doubtless, will occur again. He stood aghast at the fatal mistake which he had committed. He could see no exodus from his terrible bondage. His entire being yearned towards his first love. He buried his face in his hands: man as he was, he wept, he sobbed—sobbed loud and fast.

In this passionate outburst he was interrupted

by the abrupt entrance of his second wife, Catherine Elsmere.

Her step was stately; her form was dignified as that of a Grecian statue, or a matron depicted on an Etruscan vase; and her expression of countenance, which was habitually stern, cold, and reserved, seemed to betoken a haughty kind of virtue. Her chesnut hair was braided so as to display her delicate and well-shaped ear, and coiled in luxuriant plaits at the back of her head. She was attired in a magnificent black Genoa velvet dress, which closely fitted her finely-developed figure, and fell in ample folds at her feet. A small Valenciennes lace collar, which was fastened with a cameo brooch, completed her costume. Unconscious of any perturbation in her husband's mind, she had entered the room with the intention of proposing to him to accompany her in a drive to the ruins of some Roman baths, but the words were arrested on her lips by the sight which greeted her.

CHAPTER II.

Ne jugez pas, dit le seigneur; commandement bien simple dans un monde où il n'y a pas d'innocents pour juger les coupables.—*Pensées de Madame Swetchine.*

ROLAND started at Catherine's sudden appearance, but it was too late to conceal either the letter on the table, or the tempest of grief which it had excited.

"What is the matter, Roland?" she asked.
"Have you received bad news about your property, or what?"

Roland would have done wisely if he had evaded these questions, folded up the letter, and kept his own counsel; but he was neither prompt

in his decisions, firm in his resolutions, nor endowed with a robust and athletic will. He often acted on impulse, and as often regretted it afterwards. Though he was possessed of fair and even bright abilities, his second wife unhappily far surpassed him in strength of character and subtlety of design. His sense of honour was extreme even to weakness, and he would probably, under temptation, have committed a wrong action, rather than one which in the eyes of the world would appear dishonourable.

For some minutes he sat mute; and, rapidly revolving what was best to be done, he came to the hasty conclusion that it would be more honourable to be quite open with Catherine, and more expedient to appeal to her reason, and her generous feelings, by shewing her the letter. He, therefore handed it to her, saying, "If you read that, Catherine, I think you will not wonder at my being agitated."

Catherine drew a chair to the table. As she read the letter attentively, her countenance became dark with displeasure, and Roland per-

ceived that the effect it was producing was very different from what he had desired.

“This abandoned and artful woman,” she said, throwing the letter down, “does not know you are married again, or she would not have written in this manner. Her lover is tired of her, and she feigns repentance. Converts and penitents are the greatest hypocrites. She would fain work upon your feelings, get you to acknowledge her as your wife, and then, after a little while, play you the same trick as before.”

“It seems to me,” replied Roland, “that you judge her harshly, perhaps cruelly. There is in that letter every internal evidence of sincerity. Her return to virtue is to me far less surprising than her fall from it.”

Catherine laughed scornfully.

“All experience,” she said, “is against your theory. Such persons scarcely ever recover themselves. To fall is easy; to rise again difficult indeed. Then, as to the sincerity of the document, I wonder that you can allow yourself to be taken in so *very* easily. Why, it is only fit

for a romance. Any body who has an ounce of brains could concoct such rhapsody, if circumstances required."

"I do not think so," said Roland, sadly.

"Well, Roland," rejoined Catherine, "after all, if this wretch's repentance were sincere, that would not alter the case. Her fate is fixed, and so is yours. She must pay the penalty of her vices, and you are married again. She is no more to you now than if she had never been yours. And even if you were not divorced from her, and had not another wife, Roland, who in the world ever heard of any husband, with a spark of dignity or self-respect, taking to himself again one, who has deserted him and his children, and covered herself with indelible ignominy?"

"Catherine," said Roland, "my head is so racked by thinking about this poor creature, that I should be very glad if you would leave me alone a little while. We will talk this matter over another time."

Catherine rose to retire, and darting a pierc-

ing look of suspicion on her husband, said within herself,

“Is it possible that he can be thinking of deserting me? Perfidious simpleton! But I will be a match for them both!”

Her mind was singularly fitted for counter-plot, since, with acute perception and tenacity of purpose, she united the faculty of devising and managing the minutest details conducive to a desired end.

If Roland Elsmere had followed implicitly the dictates of his own nature, he would have written immediately to his repentant Harriet in a strain of undoubting confidence and full forgiveness. The fact is, he loved Harriet, and Catherine he loved not, though he had recently espoused her. Her spiteful vituperations of his beloved penitent tended, moreover, to make him love her still less and Harriet still more. When the whole heart is given to one dear object, it can never in equal measure be given to another; and herein we see the hand of Nature pointing to monogamy as man's proper and most blessed estate.

Once and again Roland commenced an epistle to Harriet. Once and again he stopped short.

"Perhaps," he said, "it might be more prudent to make first some inquiries about her in England, and so become quite sure before I commit myself even to an act of forgiveness."

He determined, therefore, to write to his friend, Sir William Wybrants, in a manner which would not excite his suspicion, and which, at the same time, might enable him to ascertain several important particulars; and, in the meanwhile, lest he should appear to Harriet harsh and unrelenting, he resolved to send her daily a *Galighani's Messenger*, addressed under his own hand and seal, till the answer should arrive. He felt sure that the mere sight of his handwriting would cheer her misery and revive her hopes, and yet could not, under any circumstances, compromise him.

His letter was as follows.

"MY DEAR WYBRANTS,

"We are spending the honeymoon in Paris, and are running daily the destined round

of visitors like ourselves. In the morning we are sauntering through the galleries of the Louvre, the Palais du Luxembourg, and the mediæval Hotel de Cluny ; in the afternoon we are whirled through the Champs-Élysées, and the avenues of the Bois de Boulogne; and in the evening we are cordializing with the English, or making our *acte de presence* in the *salons* of the French. The longer I live abroad, the more English my heart becomes. The more I see of French society, the less I affect it. It is, compared with that of my own countrymen, what froth, syllabub, and trifle are to roast beef and genuine 'stout.' It is vapid, frivolous, selfish, and hollow hearted, full of false professions, petty mysteries, and objectless lies. Among scores of French acquaintances, an Englishman can scarcely ever count one friend. There is a national repugnance between the two characters, which intimacy can rarely obliterate.

"But to come to the principal object of my writing to you to-day; you will perhaps be surprised at my being desirous of obtaining some

information with regard to her who was formerly my wife. I have heard that she is now living in great retirement, with her sister, at No. 9, Buccleuch Terrace, Bayswater; and, I have particular reasons for wishing to know what are her present habits and mode of life, and what character she bears from the few who know her in that seclusion. I believe she still goes by the name of Mrs. Elsmere.

“I am sure I may ask you, my dear Wybrants, to do me the kindness of calling at her lodgings, and making all the inquiries practicable of the mistress of the house. I know that your tact in such matters is inimitable. Please to let me hear the result of your visit as soon as may be.

“Always your affectionate friend,

“ROLAND ELSMERE.”

It was late when Roland closed his letter. Ringing the bell for his confidential valet, he desired him to post it, together with the *Galignani*, addressed “Harriet, 9, Buccleuch Terrace, Bayswater, London.”

Ah! Roland, you had better have posted them yourself. You little dreamed that your "faithful" Eugene was already a well paid spy, in the service of Catherine Elsmere, and that before you retired to your restless rest, copies of the address, both of the letter and the newspaper, had been placed in her hands.

CHAPTER III.

Παρασίεσαν γὰρ ἡμεῖς τοιοῦτους τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ διαρήμενον ἀπαλλάττεσθαι, ὅστις ἀπύρετος βούλεται εἶναι.

Whoever does not wish to catch a fever, should take to his heels and fly from such garrulous persons.—*Characters of Theophrastus.*

THE morning after receiving Elsmere's letter, Sir William Wybrants drove to the house of Mrs. Cronan, in Buccleuch Terrace, just as the worthy old landlady had stationed herself at the window to watch the passers-by. She was so attracted by the sight of a splendid carriage, with a fine pair of greys and gaily liveried coachman and footman, stopping at her door, that she had

not time to escape and bedizen her antiquity before Sir William Wybrants was shown into the parlour.

"Mrs. Cronan," he said (for he had desired his footman to inquire her name), "I trust you will excuse the liberty I take in calling on you. My object in this visit is simply to ask if you can (and if so, I feel sure you will), have the kindness to give me a little information respecting the two ladies, Mrs. Elsmere and her sister, who are, I believe, fortunate enough to be occupying a part of your house. I can assure you I am not influenced by any idle curiosity in making these inquiries, for I am doing it by the desire of an old and valued friend, who has written to me from the continent, and who is interested in these ladies' welfare."

Mrs. Cronan felt quite overpowered. The fine features, the fashionable dress, the dignified and graceful bearing, and, above all, the condescending affability and persuasive tones of her visitor, so completely fascinated and flattered her feeble understanding, that she felt it would be

impossible for her to respond too complacently to all that he might desire, or to pour forth her volubility in too copious a stream.

"Law bless me, sir!" she said, "certainly with the greatest pleasure; but if I had known I should have had the honour of this visit, I would have been better prepared."

Here Mrs. Cronan glanced at her attire, and continued:

"But there, I hope you will please to take me as you find me, and make excuses for everything. The ladies in the drawing-room, sir, is of a most unseptionable character; indeed, of all the lodgers I've had, there never was any that took my fancy so much as them ladies. They are always so sweet and 'greable, that it's quite a pleasure, you know, to do anything for them. They always says "if you please," and "Thank you," and they don't sim to be stuffed up with no sort of pride; and that's, saying a great deal, you know, sir, in these days, when everybody tries to stick hissself up higher than his neighbour."

“And may I ask, Mrs. Cronan,” said Sir William, “to which of these ladies you give the preference?”

“Well, sir,” replied the loquacious landlady, “to tell the honest truth, I rather inclines towards Mrs. Elsmere, though she is the eldest of the two. She’s a jewel of a lady. She is always so meek, and so patient, and so sorrowful-like, that it goes to my heart sometimes to look at her. Then her health ain’t very flourishing, poor thing. And she is so downcast. How I have seen the tears trickle like dimonds down her beautiful cheeks, when she thought I didn’t observe her. Love, you know, sir; love is always at the bottom of these things. Nothing will ever persuade me, but that Mrs. Elsmere’s husband have forsaken her, and took her children away, and that it ain’t the dear lady’s fault; for one day she asked me to fetch something from one of her drawers (you may be sure, sir, I should never have opened it else), and there I saw a miniature portrait of a fine young man,

about the same age as herself, or rather younger, and by the side of it two lockets of babies' hair, as bright and glossy as silk; and when I turned her pillow one night, as she had gone to bed early with a raging head-ache, there was the portrait lying under her head. Now, sir, isn't it cruel and selfish to 'bandon a poor ooman like that? But how mysterious it sims that he should have took off the children! That's what I can't 'splain to my satisfaction."

"What are the habits of these good ladies, Mrs. Cronan?" said Sir William Wybrants. "Have the kindness to inform me how they spend their time."

"They gets up to breakfast, sir, about nine; and very often Miss Elizabeth do read something or another to Mrs. Elsmere, while they sits together at table; but I never see Mrs. Elsmere reading any book, without 'tis "Hymns for Mourners," and the "New Testament," and the "Imitation of Christ;" and them she's pretty nearly always reading, and always has them by her side on the sofa. After breakfast

they go every day, wet or dry, to the eleven o'clock prayers at Mr. Rubrick's church. Mr. Rubrick called upon them one day, but the ladies didn't have him showed upstairs, for they don't wish to see anybody, you know. However, they sim to take to Mr. Rubrick more than to Mr. Skimsea, at the other church. They went once to one of Mr. Skimsea's Tuesday evening lectures, but they hav'nt been there since. I'm sorry for it. Mr. Skimsea is as sound a Gospel minister as ever I'd wish to hear. A great deal of praying, he says, is very dangerous; too much prayers leads to Popery. Its better to have few prayers and strong faith, than weak faith with many prayers. Mr. Skimsea is always upon faith. Faith is what you might call his hobby. To be sure, he don't forget works; but 'everything in its right place,' says he; 'faith is the substance, works is the shadow.' Yes, sir, I'm uncommon partial to Mr. Skimsea; but I don't peticlar admire his scriptur readers. If you'll believe me, there was one on them come here yesterday with his Bible

in one hand, and a parcel of tracs in brown paper under his arm. He was the most 'dave-rous faced young gent I ever saw, and looked precisely as if he was in a low fever. However, he pitched hisself inside the door quite nimble, and there he stood as firm as a tub on its bottom. 'What did you please to want, sir?' says I."

"'To read the Scriptures to your ladies, ma'am,' says he

"'My ladies,' says I, 'reads the Scriptures to theirselves, and, what's more, they lives up to 'em. *They* have got the root of the matter in them, if anybody has; and they don't want no instruction from you. They knows the Scriptures equally as well as you any day, or, may-be, them as sent you.'

"'Well, ma'am,' says he, 'I should like to read 'em a bit of Scriptur, anyhow;' and with that he squeezed his way to the foot of the staircase; but he couldn't 'vance no further, for I took my stand on the stairs right in front of the invader, as you may say, and 'stended wide

both arms, with my duster in one hand, and my dust-pan in the other, and fired a wolley into him tremenjous. 'You uncroaching, hintrusive, himpertenant, palavering upstart!' says I, 'if you dare to set foot on my staircase, I'll sweep you and your tracs and all into the street and gutter, and have you'dited for a misdemeanour into the bargain.'

"'Listen, ma'am,' says he, opening his Bible, to the words that is written in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, at the forty-sixth verse.'

"'If you presumes,' says I, 'to read one word to me; me as have known the Scripturs, like Timothy, from a child, I'm blessed (for I couldn't for the life of me help swearing), I'm blessed if I don't brush your head with a besom.'

"While we was argying, Miss Elizabeth came to the top of the stairs and said, 'What's the matter, Mrs. Cronan?' 'Its a bold varmint of a Scriptur reader, Miss,' says I, 'that wants to force hisself into Mrs. Elsmere's drawing-room.' 'Oh!

Is that all?" says she. 'Tell him that we are much obliged to him, but my sister is not well enough to see any one.' That was just like her, sir; she always do speak so soft and so civil."

Mrs. Cronan's divinity and Scripture reader had carried her a little off the rails, and Sir William Wybrants endeavoured gently to recall her.

"And what," he enquired, "do these excellent ladies do during the after part of the day, Mrs. Cronan?"

"They always dines early, sir," she replied; "and they're very simple in their eating and drinking ways, I assure you. They never takes anything with their dinner but a glass of wine, or a tumbler full of Bass's ale. The ladies that had the drawing room before them was very different. They used to have a kettle of boiling water brought up as riglar as clock-work three times a day, and to make themselves as jovial as possible over their brandy and water; and what did make me laugh ready to kill myself was,

that they sweetened it always with treacle, for 'economy's sake."

"Off the rails again," thought Sir William Wybrants, while he said to the garrulous old dame: "And after dinner, Mrs. Cronan, I suppose the ladies take a walk, or perhaps a drive?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, "generally one or the other; but always in the quietest way in the world. They walk with their veils down, so that nobody would know them as does know them, and never a soul do they see to speak to here. I had two ladies, sir, last year, who hadn't been in my house one day before half a dozen young gentlemen came, one after another, to see them. So I says to the ladies, you know, 'right about face—march—double quick time! None of these sort of frolics on my premises.'"

Sir William Wybrants was more anxious about her conclusion than her premises. He felt that he had now elicited all the needful information for his friend in Paris, and that there was no reason why he should tax his own patience any further. He therefore took leave

of Mrs. Cronan with bland courtesy, and promised never to lose an opportunity of recommending her lodgings; nor did he fail to write to Roland Elsmere, before the departure of the evening mail, an abstract of all that he had heard from her lips.

CHAPTER IV.

His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.
Tennyson's Idylls of the King.

ROLAND ELSMERE had been waiting with great anxiety for the arrival of Sir William's reply. He entertained little doubt that it would prove confirmatory of the truth of Harriet's repentance, but he was scarcely prepared to expect the evidence it would adduce would establish her deep and heartfelt contrition in so abundant and satisfactory a manner. Mrs. Cronan's evidence was the more important, because it was wholly

unstudied and impartial; and the terrible conflict which it occasioned in Roland's mind will be best shown by the following letter.

“Paris, ———, 1859.

“MY DEAREST HARRIET,

“Fully and freely do I forgive you; but never shall I forgive myself. Alas! into what inextricable embarrassments have I been precipitated by my blind anger. If I had known what your letter reveals but a few weeks sooner, we might have been happy still. But it is now too late. I am married again, Harriet,—you seem not to be aware of it. Yes, I am the miserable husband of another wife. And think you that I love her as I loved you? No, my dearest, certainly I do not. I have married her partly from motives of *convenience*, and partly from anger and revenge. I love her not. I loathe her. I loathe myself; and all the rage which I felt against you is now vainly directed against myself. I have shown your letter to my wife, but her heart is steeled against you. She is in

a state of fury, she can hardly conceal. She suspects me of the desire I have not declared, of forsaking her, and of restoring wife and children, husband and father, to each other's arms; of re-fastening the tie which unhappy circumstances have loosened, and of ratifying the covenant which I thought had been broken for ever. But she has the law of England on her side, and I am quite convinced that she would, if provoked, avail herself of it to the utmost. Oh, that accursed—thrice accursed—law! Would to God that I had never availed myself of it! It binds me with a cruel and hateful chain, which, alas! is stronger than the law of nature, of reason, and of love. Never was any man placed in so dreadful and so difficult a dilemma. If I remain in this bondage, I sacrifice your happiness and my own, and the welfare and rights of my beloved children, and consign myself to abject misery. If I attempt to escape, if I fly with you, dearest Harriet, I am doubly ruined. The law will treat me as an adulterer, for returning to my own wife—to my first and best love!

The world will take part against me and condemn me as a traitor and deserter; it will ridicule me as an imbecile, and blast my reputation as a man of honour. My wife, or she who is now regarded as my wife, will reproach me, and not without reason, as cruel, treacherous, and unjust; for I have nothing to lay to her charge: it is I who am the culprit, rather than she. It will avail little in my favour, the fact of your repentance. To this it will be replied: 'You, like every other husband in a similar case, were always aware of the possibility of your wife's reformation; why, then, did you wilfully plant yourself in a position in which such a contingency would, as regards you, be utterly fruitless? Having taken refuge under the law, why do you now complain of the shelter it has afforded you? Having claimed and adopted its provisions, you ought not to shrink from the consequences. You appealed to the Court of Divorce for a dissolution of your first marriage, and you now want your second dissolved and the first ratified anew! You besought the State

and the Church to sanction your second nuptials, and you now feel aggrieved because the Church and the State have indulgently yielded to your request.'

"No, my dearest Harriet; it may be a weakness, but I *cannot* face the reproaches, taunts, jibes and invectives of the world, especially when the world is not altogether in the wrong. I have ever esteemed my honour dearer than life, and have often resolved never to survive its loss. I must abide where I am; I want some strong principle to guide me; I must sit down in despair, in a labyrinth too dense and involved to allow hope of escape.

"We pass from scene to scene of gaiety, but midnight is in my heart. Every one tells me I look ill, and *I* know I look wretched. If I converse, I am so absent that I scarcely know what I say, and still less what others reply. If I read, the book presents no idea—no picture to the mind. If I write, or rather attempt to write, my composition consists of unmeaning scratches and hideous blotches. If I walk,

I am jostled off the pavement for want of looking before me. If I ride, my legs are grazed by carts or swiftly driven carriages on the heedless Boulevards. If I drive out, I lie back in the carriage like a man who is dumb or deranged. In crowded drawing-rooms I sit silent and alone, gazing on vacuity. If I play chess, I am beaten directly. If I am pressed into a rubber against my will, my partner is fretful because I cannot remember what cards are out. If I go to church, my ear is only assailed by sounds which, to me, convey no sense. If I am dragged to the theatre, the only scenes that pass before my view are those of our earlier and happier love. My wife affects not to observe my strange distraction, but she watches me in reality with the eyes of a lynx.

“One consolation I *will* retain, and that is a correspondence with you. For you, at least, I can collect my thoughts. To you I can pour forth the genuine secrets of my heart. Our souls, at least, may be wedded still, and may meet together when our bodies are wide apart.

Often, therefore, will I write to you, dearest Harriet, and as often I pray you to write to me. Tell me all you think and all you feel, and any plan for our reunion which appears to you to be by any possibility feasible. Tell me also—for a mystery hangs over it which I am utterly unable to explain—how you were led to be untrue to me, and also what circumstances led you to escape to London and seek my forgiveness. Conceal nothing from me; I have done with reproaches, and you need not fear them. I am all but a shipwrecked man. I am far out at sea, and the waves are rolling wildly around my head. I see one haven, one only, where I would wish to anchor, and that is at your side.

“Your loving and forgiving

“ROLAND.”

“Oh my poor brain!” exclaimed Roland, as he folded up the letter. “My interests and my feelings are distracted, my thoughts are in a state of insurrection and the throne of reason

within me is menaced with overthrow and anarchy."

He had, in fact, lost that self-reliance without which a character is feeble, becomes an easy prey to adverse circumstances, and, not unfrequently, its own victim.

CHAPTER V.

In such a position, who was to guide her in deciding on the claims of him whom she owned as her husband before God, but whom the State had recognised as the husband of another? *Memoirs of Mrs. Fitzherbert, by the Hon. C. Langdale.*

Heaven first taught letters for some wretch's aid,
Some banished lover, or some captive maid;
They live, they speak, they breathe what Love inspires,
Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires.

Pope's Eloisa to Abelard.

ON the second day after the date of the foregoing letter, Mrs. Cronan was alarmed, while sitting at breakfast, by a violent ringing of the drawing-room bell. As she was one of those beings to whom silence is extinction, she was

just in the midst of a long jabberation addressed to her tea-kettle, for want of some more intelligent companion.

"Yes," she said, "I can mind it well, the first day as I saw your face; it was purciselv thirty-six year ago come Michaelmas, in a shop at the corner of Paradise Court, in the Blackfriars Road, and exactly three days afore I was jined for better for worse to my old Hezekiah. Them days was as sweet as a sugar-basin, and *you* was shining then as bright as a new-coined guinea. Well, you've bin a good friend to me ever since, and you can't say I have neglected you, for I've put the finishing stroke to your scouring every Saturday, for six-and-thirty year."

As Mrs. Cronan could not on this occasion complain of an impatient auditory, there is no knowing how long her discourse might have been continued, nor into how many ramifications it might have branched, if it had not been interrupted by the ring we have mentioned, which in a few seconds was followed by another still more violent and importunate.

Mrs. Cronan started up, and in her commotion upsetting her tea-cup, deluged the tray with a flood of tea. At any other time this would have been regarded as a serious disaster; but she now postponed all vain lamentations, and by the help of the banister mounted the stairs almost as nimbly as in the days of her youth.

Scarcely had she opened the door when she uttered a scream, seeing Harriet Elsmere lying full length on the carpet and looking lifeless and pale as a corpse. A newspaper had fallen from her hands and was lying on the floor beside her; Elizabeth, her sister, was kneeling at her head, and loosening the upper parts of her dress.

Mrs. Cronan, happily, was by nature quite as prompt in her remedies and appliances as she was in her *copia fandi*. In less than a minute she had brought a ewer of cold water, which she sprinkled smartly in Mrs. Elsmere's face, and with the aid of sal-volatile, *eau-de-Cologne*, smelling salts and aromatic vinegar, they shortly succeeded in restoring the patient sufficiently to enable her to sit up on the sofa.

With a sweet countenance she thanked Mrs. Cronan for her kind attentions, and whispered to her sister that she wished to speak to her alone.

"Did you know, Lizzy," she asked in a low voice, as soon as Mrs. Cronan had retired, "that Roland was married again?"

Elizabeth looked sorrowful, and after a moment's pause replied,

"Yes, dearest sister, I received the news in a letter a fortnight ago, but it seemed to me so dismal that I was afraid to tell it you. I thought your health could not bear it, and also that it might prevent your writing to him as you intended. But how came you to know it, Harriet? I suppose something that you saw in that horrid newspaper has brought on this fainting fit."

"Hand it to me, Lizzy," said Harriet.

She took the *Galvani*, and pointed with her finger to a list of the principal persons who had figured at the English Ambassador's last ball, and among them to the names "Mr. and Mrs.

Roland Elsmere;" then, dropping the paper, she raised her eyes to Heaven and wrung her delicate hands in silent agony. Then her head drooped, and Elizabeth feared she was about to faint again; but she only sighed:

"Oh, my God, support me in this bitter—bitter trial!"

Elizabeth knelt by her side, took her hands in hers, and said, with an imploring look:

"Oh, my dearest sister, *do not—do not* give way so to this dreadful grief. You will kill yourself, Harriet, dear—you will—I am sure you will—if you do not struggle against it. Do *try* and be resigned. Something favourable may turn up yet. Perhaps Roland may be induced to let you bring up one of the children, and that would be a consolation at the least. Perhaps"——

At this moment the man of all others the most desired and the most feared—the postman—rapped loudly at the street-door. The servant immediately brought up a letter, and Elizabeth receiving it, exclaimed:

"Here is an answer, Harriet, at last from Roland himself. I am sure it's his hand-writing."

Harriet closed her eyes and ejaculated a mental prayer; then breaking the seal with a trembling hand and a palpitating heart, she read aloud:

"Fully and freely do I forgive you!"

"Thank God for that!" she exclaimed, "whatever may follow; but why did he marry again?" and she continued reading in silence the first half page. She then laid down the letter; a ray of hope brightened her marble forehead, and her small and exquisitely chiselled lips seemed to be actually cradling a smile.

"Lizzy," she said, "I do not think the case is desperate. I have a hope—a bright and lovely hope. Roland is married again, it is true, but he laments his marriage already; and we know that it is utterly invalid, and that he cannot, according to the Christian law, have really another wife so long as I live."

"That is most certain," said Elizabeth.

Harriet resumed the letter, and when she had done reading it, handed it to her sister, saying:

“Tell me what you think of it, Lizzy, and mark well his words, ‘I want some strong principle to guide me.’”

The sisters were perfectly agreed in their view of the case. They had often talked over the law of divorce, and had even read some valuable pamphlets on the subject. They were equally convinced that Roland had done exceedingly wrong in availing himself of an impious law; that his second marriage was not only null, but that to abide under its obligations was really, though as yet he knew it not, to add sin to sin; and that the highest and clearest duty he had to perform towards Catherine was to separate from her without any delay, seeing that her morality, as well as his own, depended on this step. Those who have sinned themselves, and then, like Harriet, have sincerely and deeply repented, are always the most solicitous for the purity and virtue of others. If my readers have patience to learn the sequel of her history, they will dis-

cover that Harriet was not merely smitten with a transient fit of remorse, but that she was a penitent indeed, and they only who believe in the possibility of such a change of character, will be able to appreciate her subsequent conduct, and to recognise the obligations which her recovery entailed upon the husband who had disowned her and chosen another bride.

Before they retired to rest the sisters had matured their plans. Harriet was strongly persuaded that it would be advisable for her to start as soon as possible for Paris with her sister. She felt that one interview with Roland would be likely to effect more than a dozen letters. She knew the magic power which she formerly exerted over him, and she hoped to regain it all. The first ardour of her own attachment also had returned upon her, and she was determined that nothing should now prevent her from slaking her unquenchable thirst for his beloved presence. Everything was staked on her success: her husband's morals, her children's welfare, her own happiness and life. She resolved, therefore, to

engage a courier and a maid; and while her sister was busily employed in making preparations for their speedy departure, she wrote at intervals in reply to the last melancholy request contained in Roland's letter from Paris.

CHAPTER VI.

For right and wrong so close resemble,
That what we take for virtue's thrill,
Is often the first downward tremble
Of the heart's balance into ill.

Moore.

HARRIET'S letter was as follows:—

“MY DEAREST HUSBAND,

“My heart is overflowing with love and gratitude towards you for the noble and generous manner in which you have pardoned your erring, but now penitent and devoted wife. That you have married another is indeed to me a subject of deep and bitter regret; but I feel

convinced that you have done so hastily, and that, on maturer consideration and further examination of the question, you will come (God grant it may be shortly) to the conclusion that your present position is untenable, that your second marriage is null, and that, unworthy as I have proved myself, I am still, according to the Divine law, your wedded and only wife.

“Alas! my dearest Roland, what a task do you set me when you ask me to recount the sad history of my decline and fall. Willingly would I bury it in everlasting oblivion, yet I will not shrink from obedience to your wish. It is well that I should endure the pain, the shame, and the mortification of the recital, because they are a part of the heavy penalty which is justly attached to my offence. To any one else but yourself it would be impossible for me thus to write; but from you I will conceal nothing.

“It was about the end of June when you left Flosdale suddenly for Vienna. Though somewhat giddy and somewhat wilful, I was then, I may say, innocent, and certainly happy. Would

to God that I had gone with you, in spite of leaving my infants wholly in the care of nurses, and of the uncertainty of your stay in Austria; but the past is irrevocable. Our house was full of guests at the time of your departure. There were—you remember it perfectly, no doubt—the Cranworths, who had lately returned from their wedding tour in Spain and Portugal; there were the Roman Catholic Laird of Glenconnel and his golden-haired niece; there was the dear daft old Irvingite, Miss Goldielea; my sweet sister Lizzy, then as light-hearted and playful as she is now serious; and, last of all, the author of my misery and yours, Walter Dunraven. He was to have left on the following day, but he was the life of the party, and he needed little persuasion to induce him to prolong his visit. I had a great regard for him as your friend, and I liked him also for his own sake. You know, in short, that he was a general favourite. He could do everything, and did everything well. When you were gone, he was always the best horseman, the most dexterous angler, the most grace-

ful dancer, the deadliest shot, and the stroke oar. He drew well, sang his own songs, and accompanied himself, had a good memory, and captivating manners, and read aloud to perfection; but he had one vice of which I had not, nor, perhaps, you either, the remotest suspicion—namely that, under the guise of a correct life, he was already practised in the art of seduction. Being, as all such men are, intensely selfish, it was, as I now believe, but a very short time after you left that he formed the dark design of becoming a traitor to his earliest friend, and of sacrificing my honour and happiness, to his own pleasure. Your absence made a doleful void at Flosdale, and in my enjoyments; and I availed myself chiefly of his society in order to fill up the vacuum in the best way I could. We were thrown much in each other's path. We spent hours in the day side by side. We sung, practised, sketched, read, walked, rode together. He read to me by the hour, and always something romantic, and about love—the soul of romance. But, as yet, I suspected nothing. My heart

turned toward you steadily and faithfully as the needle to the loadstar. I did observe, indeed, that Walter compassed me about with innumerable attentions, 'but,' I said, 'he flirts with Lizzy and Flora, and he neglects no one;' and so the observation passed. I did remark that his eyes were often fixed upon me; 'but,' I said, 'his eye is artistical, and I suppose he thinks my face would look well in a portrait;' and there was an end of that. Glenconnel and his niece Flora were about to return to the Highlands, and Walter Dunraven contrived that they should propose a scheme which really originated with himself; that our whole party should accompany them as far as Loch Lomond, and make a little tour of the Lake. The project was received with acclamation, and we started in a day or two. From the hour of our departure Walter's attentions to me became more marked and unremitting. He was almost always near me, and whatever he said and did was adulation and flattery expressed or implied.

“And here the history of my fault begins. What incalculable sorrow and shame should I have spared myself and others, if at this point I had made some excuse, returned home, and seen Walter no more. But I parleyed with temptation. I parleyed to be overcome. I said to myself, ‘If Walter falls in love with me it will be all his own doing. He will but scorch his own wings.’

“Having with him a small portmanteau full of books, he read to me very often when we were alone. He no longer selected mere tales and novels, but everything that was most amorous and voluptuous also. I allowed myself to listen in this way to the amours of Eloisa and Abelard, of Romeo and Juliet, of Paolo and Francesca di Rimini, of Medoro and Angelina in Ariosto; of Hugo and Parasina, of Conrad and Medora, of Juan and Haidee, to ‘The Loves of the Angels,’ and—worst still—to ‘The Decameron’ of Boccaccio.

“The beauty of the poetry, the sweetly modulated tones of the reader, the richly wooded

banks of Loch Katrine, the dreamy loveliness of the thirty isles of Loch Lomond, between or around which we sailed, the boats and steamers passing and re-passing crowded with merry passengers and gladdened with harp and minstrel, and wind instruments, whose music floated softly over the waters and died away among the hills, the antique ruins rising amid the solemn yews, the high rocky cliffs—the habitation of the osprey, the mountain paths, the mossy seats, the shady groves, the sunny swards, the odorous dells, the wild-flowered heath, the chill fountain, the foaming waterfalls, the rustic bridge over the thundering cascade, the ever varying colours of the scene, the moonlight and starlight beneath which we used to linger long—alas, too long—all contributed to fill my cup of poisonous enchantment. Love is a mighty wizard, and I was now the victim of his spells. I had by this time—with shame and remorse be it spoken—become the seducer as well as the seduced. If I flung Walter off the hooks at one moment, I threw a bait for him again and played

him about with it the next. If at one time I rejected his advances with scorn, I soon after encouraged him to renew them. I cajoled myself into the belief that if I was doing wrong, it was not very wrong; that if I was committing a sin it was but a little sin, a sort of pardonable folly or freak. I thought that I was but going a few steps out of my way to gather some chance flowers, and that I should soon return to my accustomed route and walk therein correctly as before. I fancied—oh monstrous self-deceit—that I might indulge in a temporary and transient attachment without sacrificing my permanent love and fidelity to you. The thought of being for ever perfidious to my Roland had never crossed my mind.

“Why should I prolong a recital, which to me is torturing and loathsome? We were staying at an hotel on the banks of the lake. Our apartments were near each other on the same corridor and—I fell.

“I fell, and from that moment my bosom was a stranger to peace. I would not, indeed, ac-

knowledge, even to myself, that I was unhappy. I walked in a certain light, but it was not

“The clear calm sky, the sunshine of the soul.”

It was a lurid and fiery and restless light. I affected unusual gaiety. I laughed more loudly, and sung more frequently than ever. I burst forth often into extravagant expressions of delight; but all was hollow, unnatural and forced.

“They who plunge into a guilty career soon find it beset with impediments and thorns. The wicked, as well as the good, turn against the wicked. A damaged reputation cripples every action, checks every advance, and festers every enjoyment. My maid was the first to suspect that all was not right, and communicated her suspicions to my sister. Our friends dropped off one by one, and we were left with Lizzy only and my poor anxious Louise. After vainly attempting to parry Lizzy’s remonstrances by prevarication and jest, I at last felt myself obliged to assume a brazen front, and to tell her

that after all I should do as I pleased. I added, however, that in a few days my follies would end, that I was about to return to Flosdale to meet and welcome you, as soon as your mission to Vienna should be completed; and that all would then run smoothly as before. I reminded her that my reputation was in her keeping since Louise *knew* nothing, but merely suspected that there was something amiss.

“In all this I was deeply deceived. When we begin to do wrong, every one busies himself with our affairs. We become an object of interest to those who before were indifferent to us, or knew us not, and their evil reports are by a special volatility, like winged seeds, blown far and wide by every wind. So it was with Walter and myself; all eyes were upon us, and we were the theme of general conversation. I believe, indeed, that Walter himself had divulged our secret, in order that it might be impossible for me to leave him and return to you. Certain it is, that when at last I determined to have my own way, and wrote to the butler at Flosdale fix-

ing the day for my arrival, I received an answer from him, saying to my unutterable dismay and anguish, that you had already returned from abroad, and had given orders at the lodge that I should not be admitted if I arrived. Then it was that I began to realize my position, and to contemplate my hideous ruin.

“ But the season of pride was not yet past. I felt indignant at your treatment of me, though my conscience owned it to be just. I denounced it as cruel, though the cruelty was all on my side. The voice of my seducer again obtained a temporary ascendancy over me, and I consented to remove with him to Ghent, which he selected, because being a commercial and unfashionable old city, scarcely any English ever make it their abode.

“ When Lizzy knew our determination and where we were going her grief was uncontrollable, and her righteous anger smote me to the quick. We were on the point of leaving, when she made her last appeal to my over-clouded reason and hardened heart.

“‘Oh, Harriet!’ she cried, ‘Oh! my sister, listen to me; be entreated, be warned by one who most tenderly loves you. The path you are treading will lead to utter ruin, and to far greater wretchedness than you suppose. Heavy and terrible judgments will fall on you—I am sure they will—because you are bringing so much misery upon others, who have deserved from you nothing but gratitude and love.’

“She would have said more, but Louise broke into the room, threw herself at my feet, clasped my knees and sobbed piteously. ‘Do not go, madam; do not go, my dear mistress!—do not go!’

“I stood trembling, pale and tearless. ‘*One* kind word,’ I thought, ‘from Roland, *one* forgiving look from him would retain me; but these things cannot.’

“The evil demons of that hour prevailed. The carriage was waiting at the door. I rushed into Lizzy’s arms: but neither of us spoke any more, and in a minute afterwards Walter and his victim were whirled away.

“It would be impossible for me to describe how dismal and wretched were the days I passed at Ghent. The never-ending streams and canals which enclose and intersect that melancholy spot appeared to me as the moats around a spacious but detested prison. Over which of its three hundred bridges could I pass and breathe an atmosphere of liberty and peace? All that under other circumstances would have amused me seemed now to oppress still more a mind already burdened beyond measure. The Hôtel de Ville, the Belfry, the Cathedral Church of St. Bavon, lined in the interior with black marble, in despite of all their mediæval charms, how dingy and dismal they looked to me. The broad noiseless streets, the huge unfrequented squares, the solemn old gable-ended dwellings, the ponderous bales, the lumbering barges, the heavy, rotund, and burly Flemings. Oh, with what ‘an aching void’ did I try—vainly try—to express from them some momentary distraction and amusement. Heaviness of heart had brought with it dimness of vision, and *chefs d’œuvre* of

Flemish art, such as the Adoration of the Lamb of God, by the brothers Van Eyck, and St. Bavon renouncing the military profession to become a monk, by Rubens, were to me coloured canvass, and nothing more. While my eyes scanned the picture, my mind was far away, contemplating the infantile ways of my innocents at Flosdale, and the wrongs I had inflicted on you. The vast Beguinage—the quiet abode of religious peace—was almost the only sight in Ghent which affected me at all; and as I strolled along its neat and beautiful houses, each distinct and tenanted by two placid nuns, and all united in a common enclosure and under a common rule, I could not but envy the lot of those in whom, by force of contemplation and prayer, heaven had gained an ascendancy over the world, and the spirit over the flesh.

“Thus my days dragged on till you sued for a divorce. Walter hailed this event with joy. I ruminated over it in silent sorrow. ‘Now, Harriet,’ he said, ‘you will be quite free. We shall be able to marry. We will go to Italy and

make friends and be as merry as grass-hoppers!’ I had a very different feeling on the subject. The love which I bore you, even in the midst of my sad and shameful defection was far too sincere and deeply rooted to allow of my thinking with complacency of such a step, and I felt convinced that a marriage under our unhappy circumstances would not in the least alter our relative position in the sight of heaven, even if it did in the eyes of the world. The more he urged it, therefore, the more I resisted it, and the more I determined inwardly that I would never yield my consent.

“ At last I fell ill from an attack of bronchitis attended with fever. During my illness I had a dream. I thought that I woke up after death in another world. I lay on my back, bound hand and foot, and alone. On all sides of me were firey and lofty walls, and over my head was a roof of granite red hot. The reflected heat of my vast dungeon burned and baked my manacled limbs. My veins were swollen and throbbing with liquid fire. Then flames burst forth from

the ground beneath me, and I was on the point of being suffocated. In my agony I desired that I might be reduced to a cinder. But, no, I was doomed to a never-ending, incomplete suffocation. The red-hot roof then opened with a violence which seemed to shake my prison to its foundations, and, as the rent widened, I heard its thunder loud and harsh articulate these terrible words:

“ ‘ Marriage is honourable, and the bed undefiled; but adulterers and adulteresses God will judge.’

“ The chasm in the roof closed, and closing repeated the warning—‘ God will judge.’

“ I awoke with a shuddering shriek; it was ‘ a dream that was not all a dream.’ It was produced, no doubt, by my difficult breathing and raging fever, but I accepted it no less as a providential dispensation intended for my good, and I resolved that if I recovered from this malady I would make my escape from Walter, explain to him in writing—what indeed needed little explanation—the reasons for my departure;

and seek in strict retirement truly to repent and thoroughly to reform.

“Circumstances kindly favoured my design. Walter had occasion soon after to go to Brussels for two days, and not thinking me sufficiently recovered, did not even propose that I should accompany him. Before he returned I was sailing up the Thames in the steamer on which I had embarked at Ostend. My fond and faithful sister met me in London, and has never quitted me since.

“May God in his mercy hear my prayers, and in spite of all obstacles, however great, re-unite you, my beloved Roland, with your own devoted and penitent

“HARRIET ELSMERE.”

CHAPTER VII.

"Hail, wedded love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring, sole propriety
In Paradise, of all things common else!"

Milton. Paradise Lost, Book iv.

WHILE the letter contained in the preceding chapter was jogging and rushing from letter-box to letter-bag, through railway stations and railway carriages, the steamboat and the successive *bureaux de poste*, a circumstance occurred in respect to Roland Elsmere which greatly tended to alter the view he had hitherto taken of his own extraordinary and difficult position.

Ever since he had lived abroad Roland had been in the habit of frequently poking about the continental churches, and prying into every hole and corner. It cannot be said that he had any very definite object in view in these researches; he had never made religion of any kind a matter of very serious study, nor had he any further acquaintance with controversial divinity than such as is usually picked up from modern history, magazines, newspapers, and the ordinary talk of the day. Being descended from Protestant forefathers, and a native of a Protestant country—and that country the most powerful in the world—he had by inheritance a general but decided conviction that the faith of Luther and of Cranmer was the rallying point of wisdom and of truth; but whenever he had occasion to balance the claims of the Protestant and Roman Catholic religions, while he contended, with a truly British pride, that the former was the more true, he invariably added that the latter was the more poetical. Even those parts of it which appeared to him to lie altogether beyond the region of

Faith, and to belong exclusively to that of the Imagination, had in his eyes a certain interest, because they were blended with so much that was tasteful, artistical, historical, and picturesque.

Often, therefore, in a leisure hour had he strolled into one of the many beautiful churches of Paris, explored each of the side-chapels, till he came to the high altar and the chapel behind it in which the Sacrament was reserved; and then, after the same manner, completed the tour of the church by the aisle opposite to that on which he had entered. Often would he take his seat among the crowd, and allow his troubled spirit to be soothed by the harmonious strains that gushed from the deep-toned organ and sweetly modulated voices of the choir, reminding him, at least, of the more elaborate and enrapturing music which he used to hear in like assemblies in Germany and Belgium.

One evening, weary of the irksome society of his new wife, he left his home with a heavy heart and distracted mind. He was too sad to

think of the theatre or the opera, which please those only who are already pleased. Seeing a church lighted up, and hearing from the street the cadences of a well sung hymn, he turned in, anxious if possible to break the chain of his own melancholy reflections. The music died away as he entered, and the Curé appeared in the pulpit, turned towards the altar blazing with many tapers and richly adorned with flowers, knelt, with the pulpit crucifix gleaming over his head, and reverently repeated a short prayer. He then rose and began to address his flock. His aspect was venerable, his features bore traces of deep thought and some affliction, and his mode of address was singularly attractive and pleasing. He was, it appeared, in the midst of a series of parochial instructions on the sacraments.

“Having,” he said, “in my last evening’s lecture, commented briefly on the sacramental nature and sacred obligations of matrimony, I proceed, dear friends, to make a few remarks on a point worthy of close attention, viz., its indissolubility.”

Never before had Roland been riveted by any words from a pulpit as he was now by this simple sentence. It left him no time for examining the details of the scene before him; for gazing on the gorgeously framed copy of Murillo's Assumption of the Madonna, which had recently been suspended as an Altar-piece, or for contemplating the Gallic Saints and Martyrs, St. Denys, the decapitated Apostle of Gaul, St. Geneviève, the Shepherdess and Virgin patroness of Paris, the valiant St. Martin of Tours, who exchanged the sword for the crosier, St. Clotilde the converting bride of Clovis, the sainted historian, Gregory of Tours, and the meek and crowned crusader, St. Louis, who, amidst a long line of Confessors, Doctors, Virgins, Abbots, Anchorites, and Prelates, on the entablatures over the gilded and painted columns, looked down with paradisaical placidity on that outer and earthly court of the inner and celestial sanctuary.

"*Its indissolubility!*" repeated Roland inwardly: but the Curé continued:—

"It has ever been the doctrine of the Catholic

Church that a marriage once lawfully contracted and consummated can never be dissolved for any cause whatsoever. Death alone can loosen the tie and set the survivor free to marry again. When a divorce is granted by the Church it is because a marriage has been contracted within the prohibited degrees of affinity, or with some person whom it is unlawful to marry; as, for example, one who is under vows of celibacy, or, lastly, because the consummation of the marriage is hopeless and impossible. A divorce, therefore, in such cases is not to be regarded as the dissolution of a nuptial bond, but merely as a declaration on the part of the Church, that there has never, strictly speaking, been any marriage at all. The Gospel has greatly augmented the dignity and glory of matrimony both by exalting it into a sacrament or means of grace, and by setting it forth as a figure of the mystical union which exists between Christ and his Church. If marriage, however, were dissoluble, it could not fitly represent this spiritual compact which is for everlasting; and the very fact of its having been

selected by the Holy Ghost, as a type of that union and covenant which, above all others, is incapable of dissolution or change, is in itself a proof that it cannot, like other contracts, be annulled by the mutual consent of the contracting parties, or by the unfaithfulness of either one of them."

Roland listened with intensest interest to every word which fell from the preacher. It seemed exactly to meet his case, and to be spoken expressly for him. Though he could not immediately yield assent to statements and reasonings which he now for the first time heard propounded in definite terms; yet he was, from obvious causes, predisposed to admit their cogency, and soundness; and sentences that to many, perhaps, appeared dry and somniferous, struck upon his ear like the voice of a prophet, or communications from the unseen world.

"Our Saviour," continued the Curé, "has by his own lips revealed and declared expressly the indissolubility of marriage. When the Pharisees proposed to Him captious questions on the sub-

ject, He told them that the facilities granted for divorce under the Mosaic law had been conceded to the Jewish people for the hardness of their hearts; but that in the beginning it had been far otherwise, that marriage was then indissoluble, that the twain had been made one flesh, and that in the new law, which he was come to promulgate, it should be as at the first; man should not put asunder what God had joined together; it should be unlawful to put away a wife, excepting on account of adultery, and that, even in this case, neither of the separated should be at liberty to marry again. ‘Whosoever,’ He said, ‘shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.’*

“The Apostle Paul propounds and republishes the marriage law of Christ in these explicit terms: “Let not the wife depart from her husband; but if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.”†

* St. Mark, x. 2—12. St. Luke xvi. 18. † 1 Cor. vii. 10—11.

‘The woman,’ he says again, in writing to the Church at Rome, ‘which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress.’*

“The Canons and Councils of the Catholic Church have always, in this, as in all other things, been faithful to the traditions of Christ and His apostles. Thus, the Apostolic Canons declare as follows: ‘If a layman divorce his wife and marry another, or marry a wife divorced by another, let him be separated from the Church;’ and when the representatives of the universal Church last assembled in the city of Trent, to pronounce judgment in the religious controversies, which, in the sixteenth century, distracted Europe, they drew up the following, among other canons, by which, as by flaming swords, they fenced round the true and orthodox doctrine of Christian marriage. ‘If

* Romans vii. 2—3.

any one shall say that the Church errs in having taught, and in teaching, according to the Gospel, and the doctrine of the apostles, that the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved on account of adultery in either of the espoused; and that neither, not even the innocent one, who has given no pretext for adultery, can, during his or her partner's life-time contract another marriage; and that he who dismisses an adulteress and marries another, commits adultery, and she also, who, being separated from an adulterer, is married to another man—if any one shall say that the Church errs in teaching these things—let him be anathema.*

“But it may be asked why is it that the Bible and the Church (which are one) insist so rigidly on the indissolubility of marriage? I answer that it is in mercy and with a view to the happiness of mankind. If at that rapturous moment which has been the subject of so many ardent hopes and aspirations, when the fond bride and bridegroom, attended by glad and

* Conc. Trident. Sess. xxiv. Can. vii.

loving relations, enter the porch of the sacred edifice by a flower-strewn path amid the peal of merry bells, and thence, greeted on their entry by soft swelling music, move onward to the blazoned altar of their God, where, kneeling lowly they await the blessing of heaven and the ratification of their nuptial vows at the hands of a delegate of the Most High; if, at that moment, the mind of bride or bridegroom could be crossed by the dark thought that one day or other their union might, by some gloomy possibility, be unsealed, and each of them might, by some strange and melancholy combination of circumstances, become, even in each other's life-time, another's spouse, I hesitate not to affirm that such a thought would, in a reflective mind, render the sweet music of that church discordant, and overcast with a cloud the fair sky of that wedding morn, and detract in an indefinite, but appreciably painful degree, from the sacred and sacramental nature of that solemn rite, and assimilate it more or less to a civil, because conventional, compact; and make that venerable

priest less like a minister of God, and more like a state functionary, a mere ecclesiastical lawyer, a magistrate or mercenary scribe; nay, more; such a thought, I maintain, would, in its measure, tend to diminish the reciprocal affection of the espoused pair, and to subtract from that entire trust, that unreserved mutual self-surrender, which locks heart in heart and constitutes the life and soul of nuptial felicity; moreover, it would lessen, or tend to lessen, in each mind, the sense of the sin of infidelity and would, to such as might be unhappily prone to offend, actually hold out a premium for the commission of one of the most heinous and cruel of sins! Nor would it be on the moral being of the married only that the possibility of divorce would work dismal effects. It would, in a proportionate degree, inject incertitude into all parental and filial relations. Children would soon learn that their parents' union was not of necessity permanent, and that the day might arrive in which, estranged from him who begat them or from her who bore them, they would have to bestow upon an alien the en-

dearing epithet of father or of mother. In proportion as the ties of blood and affinity were weakened the foundations of society would be disintegrated, loosened, or undermined, and Christian populations, through the rapid increase of bigamy, would more and more nearly resemble polygamous Mahometan and Pagan hordes.

“When the infidel power had assumed the reins of government in France, in the year 1792,* by one of its enactments it permitted the dissolution of marriage; but this unhallowed law has since been rescinded, and though several attempts† have been made to reinsert it in our code, they have happily hitherto proved ineffectual.

“A law for facilitating divorce has recently been enacted in a neighbouring country,”—here the Curé evidently alluded to England—“which has brought bigamy to every man’s door, and of which it has well been said that its title should be, ‘Adultery made easy.’ Before the sixteenth century such a law would have been impossible;

* 20th September, 1792.

† In 1830 and 1848.

it is a further development of that spirit of innovation which assails the morals, no less than the Faith of the gospel.

“To those whose wedded life is one of harmony and love, the thought of the inseparability of their union is full of consolation and sweetness, and powerfully tends to enliven and invigorate mutual affection. And when, on the contrary, matrimony is found to be fraught with special trials and frequent jars, when either of the twain would, if under slight restraints, be inclined to deviate from the path of rectitude, and to say, “No, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go,” this thought operates as a wholesome check, and promotes in each of the wedded pair resignation to their lot, and disposes them to make the best of a contract which they feel and know can never be annulled.”

Here the Curé broke into an affectionate practical exhortation, addressed to those who had entered a married life, and with this he concluded his discourse.

No sooner had he ended than the sweetest

music floated again through the sacred building, and a choir of well harmonized voices began the lines—

“Tantum ergo Sacramentum,
Veneremur cernui.”*

A priest at the same time, who had been sitting near the altar within the rails, arose and knelt before the host. He was attired in a magnificent scarlet cope which fastened on the breast, and trailed on the carpet as he moved. Four juvenile acolytes, wearing lace-fringed albs over crimson cassocks, knelt beside him. One of them brought him a censer containing charcoal on fire, another presented incense, which the hierophant sprinkled in the thuribul, from which thrice three times he tossed a thin cloud of fragrance before the consecrated wafer. Then rising he ascended the altar steps, took in both hands the jewelled silver gilt monstrance, in which the Sacrament had been exposed, and, turning toward the people, gave them the bene-

* “Let us, therefore, falling low, venerate so great a Sacrament.”

diction by moving it slowly and solemnly, so as to make with it the sign of the Cross. The acolytes incensed, what was held to be the glorified body of Christ beneath the guise of bread. Every knee was bowed, every head was bent. In the belief of that assembly the Propitiatory Victim was on the altar; the Lamb that was slain was in their midst, therefore all that met the eye and the ear was adoration. It was like Christ calming the waves of the sea, and saying unto them, "peace be still." Even the music had in its movements a solemn calm, as the choir sung one of those sublime doxologies, with which the Roman Catholic church is wont to conclude her hymns of praise:—

"Genitori, Genitoque,
Laus et jubilatio,
Salus, honor, virtus quoque
Sit et benedictio,
Procedenti ab utroque,
Compar sit laudatio."^{*}

Roland knelt with the rest, with how much belief, and how much unbelief, it would be hard

^{*} "To Him who begat, and to Him who was begotten, be praise and jubilee, salvation, honour, virtue and blessing; to Him who proceeds from both, be ascribed equal praises."

to say. He believed something, but he scarcely knew what. He was impressed with the solemnity of the occasion, and his spirit was stirred to its lowest cavern-depths by the statements and reasonings of the preacher with reference to the indissolubility of marriage.

“Fool! fool that I was,” said he to himself, “not to inquire into this subject more deeply, before I embarrassed myself with another wife; who, after all, perhaps, is not my wife!”

CHAPTER VIII.

"Ye powers who rule the tongue, if such there are,
And make colloquial happiness your care,
Preserve me from the thing I dread and hate,
A duel in the form of a debate."

Cowper. Conversation.

ROLAND had not been at home more than half-an-hour, when Catherine Elsmere also returned. She found her husband in the drawing-room, sitting thoughtful and moody before the bright wood fire, with his feet upon the fender. Taking a seat at a moderate distance, she addressed him thus, in a tone of friendly reproach :

"Well, Roland, what new vagary is this? Are you going to turn Romanist?"

"I have not," he answered, "the slightest idea of ever becoming a Romanist. What should make you think of such a thing?"

"The thought is natural," replied Catherine, "seeing that you take part in Romish services, and listen to the sermons of Romish priests. I always feared you had a hankering after that corrupt and detestable religion when I saw you loitering about so long in their tawdry churches."

"How did you know, Catherine," asked Roland, "that I had been present at a Romish service?"

"I am just come," answered Catherine, "from Lady Jemima Duke's. A Signora something—I forget her name, though she seems to know a good deal about us—dropped in a little before I left. She said she was that instant come from a church where she had seen you. You had been there all the time; had listened attentively to the sermon, which was on marriage (always a fertile theme for those lewd priests), and were

very devout—just like a Catholic; an Image-Worshipper she should have said!”

This was an invention. Catherine was never at a loss for an untruth that seemed likely to serve her purpose. She had for days past tracked all her husband's movements by means of his ‘confidential’ valet, whom she had managed to corrupt. He, unperceived, had followed his master to the church, and had reported to Mrs. Elsmere what he had seen and heard.

“Did you know, Catherine,” asked Roland, “that the Roman Catholic Church will never grant a divorce where there has been a real and valid marriage?”

“Except she is well paid for it!” said Catherine, sarcastically. “In the Romish Church you may get anything for hard cash! Pardons, indulgences, sacraments, dispensations, and divorces, all have their price. A man may, without ruining himself, buy his aunt or his grandmother out of purgatory by a given day. Tetzels abound in our days, though they don't sound quite so loud a trumpet before them as in

Luther's time. And as to stock-jobbing in bishoprics and benefices, you know very well that Dante, who was no Protestant, sent three popes, all his contemporaries, to hell for simony!"

"The Prince H——," replied Roland, "whom I knew at Berlin, did not find the Roman Catholic Church so venal as you say. He was for some time the leader of the Catholic party in the chambers. Being, by the laws of his own country, separated and divorced from his first wife, he married again. The marriage was solemnized civilly, and he made ceaseless efforts to obtain an ecclesiastical marriage, but without any success. The Princess H——, a beautiful, fair-famed, and accomplished lady, went herself to the Archbishop of Breslau to supplicate his influence on her behalf; but he refused to see her, saying he did not know such a person."

"Perhaps Prince H—— had not power and wealth sufficient to back his suit. Napoleon Buonaparte divorced the faithful Josephine easily enough, after he had lived with her thirteen years, and was married by the Church

to Maria Louisa of Austria, with equal facility. They didn't say nay to him, or to his brother Jerome either, who, a few months before he was perched upon the throne of Westphalia, espoused a daughter of the King of Wurtemberg, leaving his poor wife, Betty Patterson, to pine away the rest of her days in America."

"Are you quite sure," asked Roland, "that in both these cases the second marriage was sanctioned by the Church; and if so, on what grounds? There may have been some informality in the previous marriages which rendered them invalid. Was not Napoleon married to Josephine at the head of a regiment, without a priest, and afterwards by his uncle, Cardinal Fesch, in private, without witnesses? I know he got up a case for the divorce, and affirmed that he had never been really married. I can hardly think the Roman Catholic Church would have compromised herself in matters of history. Pius VII. showed great firmness on other occasions; and, it strikes me, yes, indeed, I am sure I have read somewhere that he positively refused

to annul the marriage between Jerome Buona-
parte and Elizabeth Patterson, stating, at the
same time, that if he did so, he should usurp an
authority he did not possess, and be guilty of a
flagrant abuse."

Katherine answered scornfully: "You talk
exactly like an apologist of Romanism, and do
so, no doubt, *con amore*. 'Invalid,' indeed!
Of course we all know that the Romish Church
has no end of quirks and quibbles, technicalities
and straw-splittings about validity, by means of
which she always contrives to get out of a scrape
whenever she is thrust into a corner and com-
pelled to yield. You remember Henry IV. of
Castile, and the frivolous grounds on which the
Archbishop of Toledo declared his marriage with
Blanche of Arragon void, after an union of
twelve years;* and Louis XII. of France, who
obtained from that *very* virtuous Pope, Alex-
ander VI., a divorce from Joan, simply because
she was crooked, ugly, and childless!† Popes

* Prescott's *Ferdinand and Isabella*, vol. i., chap. iii.

† Russell's *Mod. Europe*, vol. ii, Let. liii.

are tyrants to the weak, and sycophants to the strong."

"Perhaps so," replied Roland, mildly; "I am not well read in the history of the Popes, nor do I know what were the real grounds for the King of Castile's repudiation of Blanche, or for the divorce of Queen Joan, which was allowed by Alexander VI.: but I do remember that Pius VII. excommunicated that same Napoleon; that wasn't much like a 'sycophant;' and that Pope—what was his name?—one of the Medicis, and Paul III., a Farnese, both refused Henry VIII. a divorce from Catherine of Arragon, and excommunicated him into the bargain; that wasn't 'sycophant'-like either. Nay, France was once placed under an interdict for three years, merely because King Robert le Pieux had espoused his cousin without a dispensation. This does not look as if Rome would easily give way on a question of marriage law. But enough as to what Rome says on this subject; let us turn to a much more important inquiry, viz., what does the Bible say. The priest whom I heard

preach this evening, quoted several texts of Scripture as conclusive on the indissolubility of marriage. Now I wish to see for myself whether he misquoted or misconstrued them."

So saying, Roland stepped aside, and took down from a bookcase his own Protestant version of the Bible. After a good deal of searching and fumbling, he at last found the passages in question. The Curé had cited them accurately, nor could Roland, after attentive examination, extract from them any other sense than that which the Curé had given them. Reading them, therefore, aloud to Mrs. Elsmere, he asked :

"Now, what do you think of these texts, Catherine? It's of no use to try and blink them or slur them over. Do they not seem to be clearly on the Curé's side of the argument?"

"I'll tell you what I think," replied Catherine, "I think you have a morbid love of unsettling your own mind, and, if possible, that of others also. Don't suppose, however, that you will be able to obfuscate *my* vision by throwing Romish dust into my eyes. Of course these passages

seem clearly on the Curé's side of the question if regarded from his point of view; but in the opinion of Protestant clergymen in general they do *not* forbid a husband or wife legally separated on the ground of adultery from marrying again."

"Of the two interpretations, then," said Roland, "you think everybody is free to choose whichever he prefers."

"No," replied Catherine, "I do *not* believe any such thing. We, as Protestants, are bound by consistency and common sense to accept such texts in the sense generally attached to them by Protestant Christians and Protestant Divines. There are two ways of reading the Bible—the Popish way and the Protestant way. If you admit the former, you will be compelled to swallow as Scriptural all the most monstrous, foul and loathsome superstition of the Romish religion; for they profess to teach on the authority of Scripture all that we account most fabulous and detestable in their system. They will quote you text after text to prove the infallibility of the Pope, Transubstantiation, Purgatory, Prayers

for the dead, Auricular Confession, Penance, and the worship of Saints, Angels, Images and Relics! Everyone who has had a sound Protestant education has made up his mind before hand that all interpretations which these people put upon Scripture must of necessity be false, or suspicious at the best. It is perfectly astounding that you, Roland, should for one moment entertain the slightest respect or consideration for the Bible comments of those pitiable and despicable creatures, who are wallowing deep in the filth and mire of idolatry. They worship bread and they worship wine, worship angels, worship dead sinners, worship the Virgin as Divine, worship old bones and rags, and coats and shifts, and dolls tricked out in gilt and satins!"

Catherine had spoken with so much heat and vehemence that by the end of her last sentence she was almost out of breath. Roland was too sad to take up the gauntlet on the opposite side of the argument, nor, indeed, did he feel that acute interest in the subject which Catherine, in her displeasure, attributed to him. He, there-

fore, allowed her, without interruption, to continue in the same strain :—

“The Romish Church has always been striving to restrict the liberty of the gospel, and to bind upon men’s shoulders burdens too heavy for them to bear. Here is a case in point. A blameless wife or husband is made the victim of a partner’s infidelity, and the Church, which they call Catholic, would condemn this innocent one to perpetual celibacy! Can anything be conceived more arbitrary, unnatural, and unjust? This was one of the mediæval fetters which Luther broke in pieces. Luther was the Moses of modern times: On the laws of marriage, as in other things, every true Protestant follows in *his* steps.”

“And some true Protestants go a little beyond them,” observed Roland dryly. “For example, Milton, a Divine as well as a poet, having quarrelled with his wife, courted another woman, and set forth a public vindication of his conduct, in which he attempted to prove that confirmed dislike was as just a foundation as

adultery for dissolving the marriage contract.* In the United States, Milton's ideas have been carried out to perfection, and divorces can be obtained on a variety of grounds, in each State less serious and solid than in the other."

Catherine looked exceedingly disgusted at these remarks, which seemed to be intended to invalidate or disparage all she had so vehemently advanced; but she did not reply, and the conversation closed abruptly. It was now late. It was past midnight. It was time to relax, if possible, the already too long and too painfully stretched chords of thought and feeling.

* Tetrachordon, Works, i., p. 301.

CHAPTER IX.

"But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched, and wept, he prayed, and felt for all.
'And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

Goldsmith's Deserted Village.

THE Abbé Lagier, the Curé of St. Sauveur, was tired, though it was still early in the day that succeeded the sermon, of which an abstract has been given. From six in the morning till eight, he had been in the confessional. He had then said mass and taken a slight repast. From nine to ten he had received a crowd of poor, to whom he was almoner, and listened

to the tale of sorrow which each one had to pour into his ear. He was now sitting in his favourite room, which served him both as a library and a *salle de reception*. The weather being sultry the glass door was thrown open, and disclosed a neat terrace, and beyond it, down three broad stone stairs, a cluster of tiny plots, happily rescued from urban usurpation, and devoted with singular success to the culture of choice and fragrant flowers. Many of them had been reared from slips or roots brought by the Abbé Lagier's friends from various parts of Syria and the Holy Land; and these, while they were as bright and odoriferous as other plants, or even more so, had in the Curé's eyes the additional charm of being each a sweet memento of some spot remarkable in sacred history, or hallowed of old by the presence of his Incarnate God. Some were flourishing still in the mould of their native soil, in which they had been conveyed from the East, and stood in porcelain vases along the steps of the terrace. The Abbé was never

at a loss for flowers to decorate his altars, since he had only to arrange these precious blossoms on the flower-stands within the altar rails in order to produce at once a brilliant effect; and if his floral taste to some appeared puerile, yet all admitted readily that it was innocent and refined. Far above his garden wall rose some of the buttresses and pinnacles of that beautiful church, of which he was the pastor. As he sat at his library table he could see, through the door opening on the terrace, the well wired painted windows of the sacred building; and could trace from without the outlines of those figures with whose faces, gestures, and grouping he was familiar by long ministration within; and could hear plainly the mellowed tones of the powerful organ, whenever they chanced to breathe. He was in the midst of reciting his office. The breviary lay open before him, and beside it was the hand-book of the priest who loves his priesthood—the “*Memoriale vitæ sacerdotalis*.” He had just commenced the Psalm “*Fundamenta ejus*,” and hoped to recite without

interruption all the remaining office for the day except Compline, when his servant entered with the card of a visitor who desired to see him.

The name was "Mr. Roland Elsmere."

The Curé, taking up the breviary, retired into an inner room; and leaving the *salle de reception* to his unknown visitor, left word that he would be with him in a very few minutes.

Roland had passed a sleepless night, and the morning's post brought him Harriet's welcome and affecting letter. The sermon which he had heard from the Curé had made a durable impression on his mind on the one hand, while on the other Catherine's heavy broadsides and smart fire of small shot had not failed to take also a certain effect. Between the two he was miserable, and more distracted than ever; he knew not what to think, and still less what to do. He felt that his case above all others needed decision, yet he was utterly unable to decide. A new element of doubt had been injected into his mind, and the doubt, moreover, was one which he was not unwilling—nay, which, under present circum-

stances, he absolutely wished to entertain—namely, whether, according to the Christian law, he had any right or power to divorce Harriet and wed Catherine; and whether, in short, after all, Catherine was nothing but a legalised concubine. At last the thought struck him that, as he had heard the Curé of St. Sauveur in public, it might not be amiss to hear him, if possible, in private also.

“I cannot,” he said to himself, “help liking that man, though he is a Roman Catholic priest. He has the air of being sincere and honest, and if he is as benevolent as he appears, I may perhaps get some valuable advice from him; at all events, I shall lose nothing by seeking an interview with him.”

Such were the thoughts which had conducted Roland to the Abbé Lagier’s door. He was shown into the room which the Abbé had just quitted, and, being left alone for some minutes, he had time to look about him.

There was no affectation of austerity in the Curé’s apartment. It was furnished, on the con-

trary, in a manner suited to the position of one who was constantly receiving visits from persons in the highest, as well as in the middling classes of society. Opposite each other, and at right angles with the wide low-grated hearth, were two sofas and easy-chairs. The hearth-rug was the out-spread skin and head of a lion, sent to the Curé as a present by a Bishop in Africa. The carpet and curtains were rich and bright. Several pieces of furniture were elaborately carved in scented wood, and of mediæval antiquity. The walls were hung with richly-framed pictures of the Italian and Flemish schools, and of almost all these the subjects were sacred. One side of the room was devoted entirely to books, and, as they had been well-used, a glance at them was sufficient to prove that the owner was versed, not only in sacred, but also in the profane literature of many lands, of classic, and of modern times. With all this, there was much in the apartment which impressed upon it a monastic character. On the library table stood a small ivory crucifix, and opposite it, against the wall, was a *meuble* in-

wrought with mosaic, which, if opened, would probably have proved to be a *prie-Dieu* fashioned altar-wise. The upper part of it was a triptyc, which, being expanded, disclosed in the middle, the crucifixion, with Mary and the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross, and on either side the burial and the ascension of our Lord. Over the mantel-piece stood an image of the Virgin, with the Infant Redeemer enthroned in her arms. But the most curious ornament in the room, if ornament it can be called, consisted in certain instruments of torture, with which Roman Catholic missionaries and converts in China, and in the South Sea Islands, had been scourged, scalped, flayed, broiled, or disembowelled by the infuriated and idolatrous natives. An inscription under each of them recorded some event in the history of these venerable martyrs, and while Roland was reading them the Curé re-entered the apartment.

His manner was all kindness and welcome. The world had not taught him to be cold and proud to strangers.

Our readers may easily imagine how Roland shaped his address. "I have ventured," he said, "Monsieur le Curé, to call upon you to ask for your advice under circumstances of the most painful and perplexing kind; and I have been led to this step by the fact of having yesterday evening listened very attentively to a sermon which you delivered on a subject which deeply concerns me. About five years ago I married one whom I loved, and still love, to distraction. After the birth of two children, and during my absence in Germany, she was induced, more through giddiness than vicious inclination, by a designing traitor, who had been my friend from boyhood, to be unfaithful to the most devoted of husbands. Actuated partly by the desire of obtaining a foster-mother for my children, and partly by resentment, I divorced my first wife, and married again. Scarcely was I wedded anew, when I received the most satisfactory proofs of the deep and sincere repentance of her whom I had divorced. I would give worlds to return to her, for, in addition to other motives, I doubt, after

all I have heard from you, whether, in the sight of heaven, my last wife is my wife at all."

The Curé looked very thoughtful and sad, and after a long pause, said: "I have often contemplated, dear sir, the possibility of such cases as yours, and therefore I am not surprised to hear what you relate. The law in virtue of which you have married again is not merely an infraction of the letter of the divine law, but is also diametrically opposed to the spirit of the Gospel; inasmuch as it throws entirely into the shade the possibility of true repentance, and teaches man to scorn, and reject as inadequate, the contrition which God accepts. It is, I admit, humiliating to a man to receive back an erring and repentant wife, while a wife, on the contrary, is generally proud of recovering the lost or truant affections of her husband. The distinction, nevertheless, is one of human feeling and human respect; the guilt being in both instances alike, the duty of forgiveness is the same also, if the repentance of the culpable party can be clearly established."

"Do you think then," asked Roland, "that a Catholic would be more likely than a Protestant to forgive a repenting wife?"

"Undoubtedly," replied the Curé, "from the very fact of his being unable to marry another with the consent of the Church."

"And what," said Roland, "if a Catholic had, in spite of the Church's prohibition, done as I have done? How would you advise him?"

"The case," answered the Curé, "though very distressing, would be far more simple than yours. The second marriage would be absolutely null, and the indispensable condition of his receiving the sacraments would be separation from his unlawful wife. The responsibility for the act would rest with the Church rather than with the individual. She would not only advise such a step, but require it."

"Then, I suppose, Monsieur le Curé," said Roland, "that you would have me infer that the best way of simplifying the fearful difficulties in which I have involved myself, would be to become a Roman Catholic?"

"I should be sorry, under present circumstances," replied the reverend man, "even to allude to such a thing as your becoming a member of the Catholic Church; I have spoken only in reply to your question, of what the Church would have advised and required if you had been already within her pale."

"And why this distinction, may I ask, Monsieur le Curé."

"God forbid," was the reply, "that I should suggest as a reason for entering the Catholic Church anything short of finding truth here, and Heaven hereafter. Conversion from any inferior motive would be no real conversion, would bring no spiritual blessings to the convert, nor be any real accession to the ranks of the faithful."

Roland's sense of politeness was too refined to allow his pressing the subject any further on the attention of the Curé. He saw how utterly impossible it was for him to give advice in a matter which lay altogether beyond his sphere. The sentence of adultery which he pronounced

by implication on Roland's connection with Catherine, impressed him deeply; nevertheless, his intercourse with priests, in their priestly capacity, began and ended with this visit. He had no turn for controversy; his earliest impressions of the Roman Catholic religion had been unfavourable; and to set his face in that direction for any temporal gain, would, to his honourable mind, have been conduct deserving reprobation and contempt.

Whatever were Roland's feelings with regard to the Roman Catholic faith in general, there was but one opinion to be formed of the Curé of St. Sauveur. He was evidently one who believed what he taught, and taught what he believed. The love of God inspired him with the love of worship, and the love of man produced in him the love of beneficent toil. Nature and grace had fitted him to be a pastor and nothing else. In any other vocation he might have been resigned, but he would not have been happy. He was all the priest, and always the priest—*totus in illis*. In the little he had said to Roland he

had shewn such feeling and discretion as quite to command Roland's respect and win his affection. He pressed his hand long and warmly in parting with him, and with equal sincerity and benignity said :

“The painfulness of your position, my dear sir, affects me the more deeply, because I am unable to offer you any counsel. My prayers—such as they are—are all I have which can by any possibility aid you, and these shall be yours. I will commend you and your sorrows to the mercy of One who often complicates our difficulties in order to signalise more brightly the power and grace of His deliverance.”

CHAPTER X.

Μείνον, Ἄδωνι,
Δύσποτμε, μείνον, Ἄδωνι, πανύστατον ὥς σε κιχείω,
Ὡς σε περιπτύξω, καὶ χεῖλεα χεῖλεσι μίξω.

Stay, Adonis, unhappy Adonis, stay, that at the last I may find thee, that in my arms I may enfold thee, and mingle lips with lips.—*Bion's Epitaph on Adonis.*

ROLAND was returning from his visit to the Curé, and passing under the long and graceful arcades of the Rue de Rivoli with a heavy heart, when he observed a crowd assembled at the entrance to the Tuileries. It is the same in all countries—the people flock together to gaze at a crowned head, even though it be the head of a calf, a fox, or a hyena. Napoleon III. is, above

all other European sovereigns, an object of insatiable curiosity. He is a living mystery; and all men who have the opportunity, scrutinize his features, as if by so doing they could gain some light, however small, on his impenetrable character, and deep designs. They regard him with painful interest—with feelings akin to those with which they who dwell on the vine-clad slopes and luxuriant foot of some volcanic mountain, look upward to the cloud-capped summit, admiring its awful greatness, but knowing not how soon that crater's peaceful breathings may be changed for thundering, and earth-rending eruptions of candescent lava and devouring fire. Even those who have seen him often, have conversed with him, or, as Roland had, stood in his presence, stop, nevertheless, side by side with masons and errand boys, to catch a glimpse of the great man of his epoch, when he issues from the secrecy of that cabinet whose electric wires regulate the destinies of nations.

The policemen who had mustered in strong force at the palace gates, were now actively

clearing the road, and compelling the too curious multitude to keep the line of the pavement. This was the signal of the Emperor's approach. Almost immediately after, he appeared on a beautiful jet-black steed. The horse was but middle sized, as best suiting the imperial rider's height. Two gentlemen of his household rode on his right and left, and two grooms followed at a convenient distance. This was all the cortége. He who holds in his hands the reality of tremendous power, can afford to dispense with some of its trifling insignia. So there he sat—the brave, cold, thoughtful, iron-willed Emperor. His face told no tales. No changes passed over it. It was hard as silex; it was like the Black Sea in a dead calm. If it expressed anything, it was keen, penetrating craft, and cold severity; but this expression resulted, not from mental workings discerned through a veil of flesh, but from the eyes of this ambitious man being habitually almost half closed.

No one ever believed him to be a good man; yet who besides, that was not good, ever did so

much for the benefit of society? Who besides, that was not good, ever became so successful and so great, and yet committed so little evil, so few acts of violence and wrong? Even during his *Coup d'Etat* he held his terrors, as it were, in a leash. Who besides could have made himself notoriously the imitator of the first Napoleon, and yet have avoided the greatest faults of his prototype, in whose place he stands, and have distinguished himself by that very moderation in which his model was so signally wanting?

There he rode—the carbonaro of Romagna—the aspiring rebel of Strasburg—the daring adventurer of Bolougne—the gaoler-baffling prisoner of Ham—the dauntless President—the people-chosen Emperor—the victorious hero of Solferino. There he rode as if no assassin or maniac had ever levelled a pistol at his breast. He feared not death—for he believed in destiny. He thought not of danger, or, if he thought of it, he said within himself, ‘*La balle qui doit me tuer n’ est pas encore fondue.*’

Roland watched the trotting of the Imperial

charger, till the arcades on the right, and the umbrageous chesnut trees of the Jardin des Tuileries on the left, closed behind the horsemen. For a moment—one little moment—Roland forgot his sorrows in revolving the Emperor's career of triumph, and in applying to him the lines written on his more famous, but less glorious uncle, in one of the most beautiful odes ever composed—

“Fu veragloria? Ai posteri
L'ardua sentenza; noi
Chiniam la fronte al Massimo
Fattor, che volle in lui,
Del creator suo spirito
Piu vasta orma stampar.”*

As he was turning to resume his walk he felt a hand laid gently on his arm, and looking quickly round he beheld—O thrilling and overpowering sight!—his own repudiated, repentant, loving, beloved, and adored Harriet, with her

* “Was it true glory? Posterity must decide the difficult question. Let us bow the forehead to the great Maker, who chose to imprint on him a vaster trace of His own creative spirit.”

Manzoni. Il Cinque Maggio.

sister Lizzy at her side. Roland's brain reeled with emotion, and his full heart choked his speech. He gripped rather than pressed Harriet's hand, and fondly embraced her, not forgetting Lizzy in the midst of the crowd. Ere five minutes were past they had crossed the square in front of the Palais Royal, and were safe in the saloon, which Harriet had just taken in the Hotel du Louvre. Her feelings, no less than those of Roland, were perfectly uncontrolled and uncontrollable. Like torrents from mountain sources, they rushed into each other's embrace. They clung together with a cohesion the more persistent because Fate, Providence, and circumstances seemed to be bent on keeping them apart. As they sat side by side, their foreheads, their cheeks, their lips were pressed together fervently and closely, as if to reverse by resistance that cruel law which now made such endearments illicit. The passionate tenderness of their first love had returned upon them in all its fulness. Every idea of recrimination was scattered to the winds; repentance and forgiveness on both sides were realized in a singular

degree. Each had been injured, each had been the injurer, Harriet by her sin, Roland by his vindictive folly; but sin, folly, vengeance, and mutual injuries, all were now whelmed in the tide of love. The confluent streams of their affection mingled and assimilated the more impetuously, in consequence of those very barriers and obstructions which they had now, for a moment at least, surmounted and swept away.

Harriet had married in her eighteenth year, and was now in her twenty-third. Her beauty was great, and she was still in its zenith. As she passed through the streets all men rendered her loveliness that homage, which the God of Nature had assigned to it as its due. All men gazed on her with admiration, and many paused to look again when she had gone by, and many blessed the footfalls of her goddess-like feet; and many exclaimed inwardly, "O, angel of light!" and many coveted so resplendent a treasure and said: "Blessed is the man that calleth thee by his own name." Time had not yet robbed her of

a single charm, nor dimmed in any way the brightness of her intelligent face. Grace, dignity, and sweetness characterized all her movements and address, fascinated every beholder, and won every heart. If strong emotions of mind, intense anxieties, bitter sorrows and self-inflicted bereavements had made her countenance pensive, it was on that account more beautiful in Roland's eyes, since it contrasted favourably with the unsubdued vivacity and giddiness of her youth, and had in it a pleasing homogeneity with the superinduced sadness of his own heart.

"You did not tell me in your letter, dearest Harriet, that you were coming to Paris," said Roland.

"I did not think it could answer any purpose," she replied, "for I was resolved to see you almost as soon as you could have received the letter."

Then, flinging her arms passionately round his neck, and leaning her raven hair on his shoulder,

and burying her gazelle-eyes in his breast, she added, in a voice broken and indistinct with sobs :

“ Fly with me, dearest Roland ! Let us fly to some new and happier land. Restore those beloved babes to their bleeding-hearted mother. Make haste to escape from a position which will always be your torment. Let us take Lizzy with us wherever we go. She will be a second mother to our children, and a support and comfort to us in every way.”

Roland remained silent.

“ Why do you hesitate, my precious husband ?” she continued. “ Our safety and happiness lie in a prompt decision.”

“ There is no hesitation in my desires,” replied Roland ; “ I would fain fly with you this instant ; but I hesitate to act unjustly towards her, whom, alas, I have espoused. I love her not, it is true, as I love you ; but she has done me no ill, and I have nothing to lay to her charge.”

“ You act unjustly towards her, dearest Roland, by living with her, for she is not your wife ;

to separate from her will be the highest and purest act of justice."

"I believe it would," said Roland, "in the abstract; but the law—the law—there is the misery of the matter—the law—would to God that I had seen it sooner as I see it now—is on the side of wrong, injustice, bigamy, and adultery! Catherine, however, will avail herself of it to the uttermost. She is as firm as a hill of granite, and perhaps as hard. She would follow me to the ends of the earth if I fled, and discover me though hidden in its remotest corner. I believe she can compel me by law to live with her, and, if so, I feel certain she will not scruple to do so. If I desert her openly my honour will be turned into shame and everlasting contempt. We must adopt a middle course. If I do not publicly break with her, neither will I abandon you, now that I hold you once more in my arms. The Bohemian gipsy prophesied aright!"

"What Bohemian gipsy, Roland? What do you mean?" asked Harriet.

Roland felt it a relief to go off for a few moments from the practical question before them, which was full of the most harrowing difficulties.

"Last year," he said, "I was making a tour in Switzerland in company with Count Réaumur and his family. We had penetrated to the Benedictine Abbey of Einseidlen, which lies embosomed in the depths of a vast forest. On a certain festival, crowds of strangers and pilgrims—sometimes as many as twenty thousand—flock to this secluded monastery, from all the Swiss cantons and from various surrounding countries, to pay their vows at the shrine of the sable image of "Our Lady of Einseidlen." What to us appears superstition, to them is reason and religion, and they hold with all the assurance of faith that the intercession of the Virgin is all-powerful in heaven, and that her prevalence is specially manifested in particular localities, of which the Abbey of Einseidlen is one, and they hope through her whose aid they devoutly supplicate, to obtain more than will compensate for

all the loss and toil of their long pilgrimage through woods and wolds, through rocky defiles, and wastes of mountain snow. The music in the Abbey Church was perhaps the sweetest and most thrilling I ever heard, and might be called music in perspective. When the notes of the organ first began to breathe in that spacious edifice, they were scarcely audible. Was it silence in the distance, or was it sound? Was it heavenly melody struggling with silence? It was. The dulcet sounds prevailed; silence was overcome, and, oh, how sweetly! The volume of music sensibly increased, assuming by slow degrees a clearer and fuller form, taking a wider range, making livelier sallies, putting forth its crescent powers by starts, and then, in turn, like an advancing tide, fell back softly upon itself, till in the end it seemed to luxuriate in its manifold manifestations of sweetness and rolled its harmonious thunder from aisle to aisle, from arch to arch, from roof to roof, from earth to heaven."

Harriet sunk her head upon Roland's knees and wept. "Oh! that I had been with you then,

my dearest husband," she said, "instead of being where I was. But go on. Tell me about the gipsy. I love to hear you talk. Your words are to me like rain on scorched grass."

"Well," continued Roland, "we had gained an elevation at a little distance from the Abbey in order to watch the arrival of the pilgrims. It was, indeed, a sight singularly picturesque. The Abbey, and the village which it had created in its neighbourhood, lay, like an oasis, in the midst of the far and wide-spreading woods. Along every road and forest path converging in this open space, troops of pilgrims ever and anon appeared and disappeared among the foliage, the swards, and the craggy slopes. They were attired in the costumes of their native cantons and countries, and marched, staff in hand, in companies with a cross-bearer, and often a pastor at their head. Many of them carried banners with suitable images and devices inwrought in bright coloured silks, and many bands sung psalms and hymns, to enliven their faith, and beguile the toils of the way.

“We were sitting in a cluster on mossy stones and roots of chestnut and cedar, when one of our party descried a tent among the trees, and a moment later a Bohemian gipsy made towards us, followed by two tiny tottering curly-polls who called her ‘mother.’ Gipsies soon become mothers; and this lovely vagrant had evidently lost no time. She was as sun-burnt as other gipsies; more graceful than most, and more beautiful, perhaps, than any. Her eyes burnt like lamps of fire, and her profuse and jet black hair was interwoven with wild flowers, and corn-spikes. Her robe of bright blue cloth scarcely reached below her knees; over it she wore a jacket of crimson edged with gold braid; the sleeves fitted close to her arms, and terminated half-way below the elbows. Round her wrists and ancles she had circlets of bells. A young man with a flageolet in his hand walked by her side. When within a few paces of our party, she began dancing to her companion’s music. Her limbs were supple, her looks winning, her movements skilful and graceful. While she danced she sung

the praises of mirth, and strangely magnified, as songsters will, its efficacy as a preventive of human suffering. The burden of her lay was:—

‘Dances and songs are the powder and balls
We fire at the sorrows that march on our halls.’

“The effervescent melody evaporated, and the dancer, approaching me with a smile, said, ‘my young master, may I tell your fortune?’

“‘My pretty prophetess,’ I replied, ‘you may tell me what you please.’

“So saying, I extended my hand towards her. She gently put it aside, and said, ‘no, no; imposters and false prophets look at the hand; I look at the face. There I read all—past, present, and future. Ah! you have been at sea, and that not long ago, in a great storm and a mighty whirlwind.’

“My companions interrupted her with peals of laughter, knowing that this was incorrect. The gipsy looked at them only with a smile, and continued, ‘And in the storm you lost your all; but you will find it again.’

“Then she added dark words and mysterious,

—‘You will lose it again, and your loss will be gain.’ Now I stand upon the rock and clasp you again in my arms, my lost treasure, nor will I let you go. So far, at least, the gipsy has prophesied aright. I have a plan in my mind. I shall leave you and dear Lizzy now, and return in a few hours to tell you if I have been able to mature it. We must adopt, as I said, a middle course. Catherine may at last resign me voluntarily, if I do not attempt to wrench myself from her rudely and openly.”

Harriet sighed, for she thought the middle course would lead to further sorrow and shame.

CHAPTER XI.

Trust me, Clara Vere de Vere,
From yon blue heavens above us bent
The grand old gardener and his wife
Smile at the claims of long descent.
Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.

Tennyson.

It was but a few days after the conversation recorded in the last chapter, that the old Baron de Barrère returned to his ugly old red-brick chateau in his old shooting-jacket, half-boots, and rough leggings. Mounting slowly the steps to the drawing-room door, he entered the spa-

cious apartment, laid his shot-belt and powder-flask on a rusty and faded billiard table, and seated himself in his own time-worn arm-chair in a snug and carpeted corner of the oak-floored saloon. Exactly opposite him sat the somewhat dowdy and very gray-haired Baroness. No sooner had her husband taken his seat, than she laid aside her spectacles and the legitimist *Gazette de France* which she had been reading.

"Well, Cesarine," said the Baron, "so you have had a visit to day, I hear."

"*Oui, mon cher ami,*" replied the Baronne; "the deed is done."

"What!" exclaimed the Baron, in amazement; "you do not really mean to say, Cesarine, that you have definitively let this ancient chateau de St. Amand without consulting me, who inherit it from a long line of illustrious ancestors?"

"There you are again, Louis, on the old subject," said the Baroness, tartly; "but don't alarm yourself: Monsieur le Baron de Barrère, with his long line of illustrious ancestors, has not

been dishonoured. I told these strangers that I could not arrange with them finally in your absence, but that they should hear from your *homme d'affaires* without delay."

"Quite right, Cesarine," said the old Royalist; "we must try and keep up appearances. *L'homme d'affaires, c'est moi-même*. I have lost enough already by those thieves, the notaries. But, oh, *mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* to think that I, the thirteenth baron of the house of de Barrère, whose forefather, Philippe de Barrère, was raised to a barony by Louis XI., four hundred years ago, should have to let the best part of my ancestral habitation, and go up stairs to the top of my chateau, and live with rats and mice in a *grenier!*"

"Louis XI.!" rejoined the Baroness, with an air of contempt. "It is unfortunate that your family should owe its nobility to that crafty, cruel, unscrupulous, perfidious tyrant, who depressed the noble to exalt the base."

The old Baron winced under this offensive insinuation, and retorted: "I don't think it's for you, Cesarine, to talk about the base-born

being exalted to honour. Did I not raise you from a tobacconist's daughter to be a baroness?"

"To prop your falling fortune, Louis," replied Madame de Barrère, indignantly. "But for the dowry of the tobacconist's daughter, you would never have been able to buy up the old chateau, many a long year after it had been confiscated, and bought and sold again and again. Indeed, but for me, Louis, you would be at this moment little better than a pauper."

"Well, Cesarine," said the Baron; "I owe you something, but you owe me much more. What are gold and silver compared with gentle blood and noble descent, and an alliance with an ancient and illustrious house? A noble pedigree is to my mind almost synonymous with virtue and valour, and all that is great in man."

Madame de Barrère passed her days in combating, with little success, her husband's inordinate love of rank. In reply to his last extravagancy, she said: "In valour and prowess nobles in general are not wanting. We won't say much about their virtue, and as to

genius, art, sciences, and literature, it strikes me that in these things commoners have excelled them far."

"Ah!" exclaimed Monsieur de Barrere, "that's one of your low democratic sentiments again. But who are these people who want to take the best part of the Château? Not English, I hope? I would as soon let it to Laplanders or Hottentots, as to those shop-keeping revolutionary heretics."

"I can't think, Louis," said the Baronne, "why you have such a spite against the English. It is a little ungrateful on your part. Your father was glad enough to take refuge among them during the reign of terror. Your earliest recollections of hospitality must be connected with England."

"England then, Cesarine," replied the Baron, "was very different from England now. Then she boasted a loyal, incorrupt, and monarchy-loving population; then the glorious policy of the immortal William Pitt espoused the cause of sovereigns against their rebellious subjects. Then

England was the friend of my father's royal master and august patron—that holy, blessed, sublime, and unsullied martyr to divine monarchy—Louis XVI. Then she supported the rights of his imprisoned and slowly murdered son and heir, Louis XVII, and those of the Bourbon dynasty exiled, impoverished, and proscribed. Now England is a republic; the Commons rule the crown. The throne is a sham; the government fosters revolution in all lands. It either will not interfere at all, or interferes on the side of the people against their lawful rulers. Think of the mean, cowardly, and infamous manner in which the English allowed my beloved lord and king Charles X., the thirty-fifth crowned successor of Hugh Capet, to be ousted by a rabble; and supplanted by that usurping scoundrel and demagogue the Duke of Orleans, son of Phillippe Egalité! Ah! Cesarine, those were pleasant and sunny days we spent when we had apartments in the Tuileries, when I had, like my fathers, a post of honour in the royal household; and shared in all the pomps and pleasures of a

brilliant court. Oh! that the king had put the little Duke of Bordeaux at the head of his army, and trampled the *canaille*—the *sacré canaille* of the revolution into the dust and mire for ever.”

Whenever the worthy Baron uttered the word *canaille* his anger was known to be at boiling heat. It was so on the present occasion. His nostrils dilated and his eyes glared, and quitting his seat, he paced up and down the saloon breathing execrations loud and deep on republics, constitutions, parliaments, popular suffrage, reforms, progress, free press, and every other item in what he stigmatized as democratical cant. When his seething wrath had somewhat subsided, he resumed his seat, and said:

“And these English who want to take the Château, Cesarine; what are they? Remember, I will not allow the Château de St. Amand to be overrun by vermin, however rich; no, not even to save it from the hammer. Have you ascertained to what caste these people belong, and what position they hold?”

“They are of a very old family, Louis,” re-

plied Madame de Barrère, "and come directly from the stock of Noah."

The Baron answered scornfully :

"You are always bothering me with that trite, stale, stupid joke about the stock of Noah. Of course they spring from the stock of Noah, but from what branch of the trunk? There are green branches, Cesarine, and withered branches, sound branches and corrupt branches, big branches and small boughs, topmost branches and low twigs. Now from which and what kind of branch do these people derive their origin?—that is the question. Never will I dishonour and defile the ancient dwelling of the Barons de Barrère, by letting it myself to low and snobbish tenants."

"You really need not be afraid of anything of the sort, Louis," said the Baronne. "Mr. Roland Elsmere has been engaged in a diplomatic mission at the Court of Vienna, and is a personal friend of Lord Oxenham, the British Ambassador in Paris. I should think this ought to satisfy your aristocratic requirements, and be a sufficient

guarantee for the respectability of your tenant. Mr. Elsmere has now some affairs of importance which require his presence in Paris, but he will come here as often as possible. Mrs. Elsmere and her sister, with two children and the servants, will be here constantly, and occupy the first floor of the Château with the *rez de chaussée*, and share with us the use of the park. But there, Louis, is a great difficulty; what shall we do with that poor creature Mademoiselle Cyr?"

The conversation which here followed between Monsieur and Madame de Barrère was carried on in low tones, and, even if recorded, would scarcely be intelligible to the reader, unless he were previously acquainted with some of the leading incidents of the Baron's early life.

It was in the year 1783, and in the gorgeous palace of Versailles, that he first saw the light. The star of the Bourbon destiny was then about to enter its revolutionary phase, and the immense and unexampled expenditure of the court of Versailles contributed among other causes to its decline and fall. Louis de Barrère retained

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through life a vivid remembrance of the interminable amusements which he derived in his childhood from the parks, the forest, and the gardens of the royal abode; and the less costly, but not less elegant *Petit Trianon* of the merry-hearted Queen Marie Antoinette. There, in happy ignorance of impending dangers, he sported daily with little comrade nobles among the marble gods and goddesses, sylphs and fawns, the ever tossing fountains, the crystal reservoirs peopled by gold and silver fish, the labyrinthine groves, the choice parterres, the perfumed orange-ries, the aviaries replete with birds of Paradise and Indian plumage; the well watered lawns, the broad flights of marmorean stairs, the sunny lakes and painted skiffs, the dulcet lutes of amorous knights on the water or among the trees, and the merry groups of bright ladies and gay cavaliers. The pleasure grounds of the Palace of Versailles were then a scene of continual enchantment, and more than realized the fabulous gardens of delight of the far famed Caliphs and Emirs of oriental climes.

At length the long gathering storm burst in all its fury on the devoted head of the king; nor was it the least of his misfortunes, that he involved in his own ruin that also of his adherents and friends. He had made every possible concession, far more indeed than his judgment and conscience could approve; but nothing could save him eventually from the violence of those who were bent on his destruction. No sooner had his royal blood stained the Place de Louis XV., on the fatal 21st of January, 1793, than Louis de Barrère's father turned all his thoughts towards escaping from his native land. He contrived, therefore, to sell at an enormous loss a large portion of his inheritance, and with all the money he could collect, and after a series of disguises and hair-breadth escapes he succeeded in taking refuge with his family on board an English man-of-war cruising between Calais and Dover.

He had chosen Bath as his place of residence, and his son Louis, in their eighteenth year, had formed a violent attachment to the daughter of a yeoman, of Tiverton. As he had no idea of

marrying a girl without either rank or fortune, he persuaded her to fly from her home and accompany him to a watering-place in the Isle of Thanet. Long and bitterly was he punished in the sequel for this act of folly and sin. Louisa Loveton became a mother, and gave birth to a child, who was destined to be her father's continual cross and shame. The unfortunate little being so nearly resembled a monstrosity, that the midwife who was in attendance thought it necessary to consult a medical man as to whether it would be right to allow it to exist. He gave it, however, as his decided opinion, that the infant must be permitted to live, and that to deprive it of life would be homicide; but that the deformity with which she was afflicted being so singularly hideous, it would be desirable, for others' sake as well as her own, that she should never be exposed to public view. She had not lived a week before her unhappy mother died, and her father was unable, nor indeed did he seek, to escape from the responsibility of providing for her support.

He accordingly employed the midwife, to whom he was known under a feigned name, to convey his miserable offspring in a fishing-smack to Calais, to which access was again open in consequence of the peace of Amiens. Here she consigned the baby to the charge of an English friend, a poor woman, who had lately been left a widow, and without any means of subsistence. To her the unsightly infant was a god-send, but she was warned most distinctly it would be withdrawn without any delay if she made inquiries respecting its parentage, talked about it to her neighbours, or showed it unveiled to any one except a physician; and to him only if absolutely necessary. She was to instruct the child also from her earliest years to do every thing possible for herself, so that in time she might become perfectly independent of others, and able to live alone.

Madame Cyr fulfilled her engagement faithfully, and as the little *lusus naturæ* grew up, it was no wonder that she came to be called by her nurse's name. Indeed, being naturally of a kind

disposition, she commiserated the child's lot, and did all that lay in her power to mitigate its severity. She contrived to teach her to speak, after a fashion, both English and French, and, when arrived at a proper age, she procured for her the instructions of a Curé, without, however, allowing the worthy pastor to see his catechumen's face. She inculcated upon her deeply the necessity of being resigned to her lot, and the impossibility of her communicating like others with the rest of the world. She veiled her in such wise, that she could see without being seen, and succeeded in keeping her entirely to herself, and parried the curiosity of her neighbours more successfully than could have been expected.

On the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty, Louis, who by the death of his father had become Baron de Barrère, returned to France; but although he was very graciously received by Louis XVIII., his fortune was so slender that he was utterly unable to maintain a position suitable to his rank. Several of his friends recom-

mended him to sacrifice all idea of a noble alliance, and rather to make money the first consideration. His cousin, the Comte de Jarnac, declared that if De Barrère would put himself entirely in his hands, he would very soon manage the matter to his full satisfaction. He accordingly waited on a wealthy tobacco-merchant named Noyon, with whom he had been previously acquainted, and formally demanded the hand of his daughter in marriage for De Barrère, on condition of his bestowing upon her a suitable dowry. Noyon affected much reluctance, but in his heart resolved to make Cesarine a Baroness at any price. At last, therefore, appearing to be persuaded by De Jarnac's arguments, he consented to confer with the damsel on the subject, and to leave it to her decision. On the morrow De Jarnac received a note, saying that Madame and Mademoiselle Noyon would be happy to have the honour of making the acquaintance of Monsieur le Baron de Barrère, whenever he would be pleased to bring him to their house. The first visit sufficed to deter-

mine Cesarine's fate. She was fascinated by the Baron, and dazzled with the prospect of a title, and perhaps a place at Court. She saw her suitor, it is true, only in the presence of others; but his noble bearing and graceful manners were enough to fix her choice irrevocably. De Jarnac found no difficulty, on his next visit, in arranging the marriage compact. Louis and Cesarine were affianced, and their wedding was shortly to ensue.

In France young lovers are rarely allowed to be together alone; but one evening the Baron drew his betrothed aside into a recess in the drawing-room where they could talk unheard, and like a straightforward and honourable man, disclosed to her the existence of his illegitimate offspring, and also the other circumstances of which the reader has already been informed. He added that if she felt this to be an insuperable obstacle to her marriage, she would be free to cancel her engagement, though in that case he should of course die of a broken heart. Cesarine replied that she could not think of condemning

him to so cruel a death, that her choice was made, and that nothing she had heard from him would alter it.

It was not more than three years after their espousals that the Baron received, through a series of different hands, a communication from Madame Cyr, to the effect that her health and strength were fast failing. In the event of her death, which might shortly be expected, it would be necessary to make some new arrangement for the unfortunate girl entrusted to her care.

Monsieur and Madame de Barrère were greatly perplexed and troubled by this announcement. After consulting seriously and long, they concluded that it would be wisest and most merciful to take Mademoiselle Cyr, as she was called under the shadow of their own wings, and locate her in two small rooms attached to the lodge of the Château de St. Amand. They represented her to the world as the daughter of a valued housekeeper of the former Baron, who by his last will and testament had left her to the care and support of his son, the present Baron de Barrère.

Such were the inhabitants of the Château at the time of this story. Troubles had come on the proprietor in his declining years; the fall and expulsion of the Bourbons in 1830, two unsuccessful lawsuits, and the extravagance of an only son who had taken arms in the Austrian service, had reduced him at last to the necessity of looking about for a co-occupant of his home, to save it from the clutches of importunate creditors.

CHAPTER XII.

"I; prolem committe vadis; tibi serviet rœquor,
Pectoraque his scopulis asperiora fuges."

"Go; trust thy offspring to the rolling sea,
Subservient waves shall minister to thee,
And hearts as rocks obdurate thou wilt flee."

Ovid.

ROLAND ELSMERE returned, as he had promised, to the Hotel du Louvre in a few hours, and was ready to propose the plan which the reader has by this time anticipated. St. Amand was situated about forty or fifty miles from Paris, and Roland had ascertained that it would be easy to secure

the greater part of the Château. Here he intended to lodge Harriet and Lizzy, to provide them a new set of French servants, and restore his two children to their mother's arms. He was actuated in this measure not only by his overwhelming love of his repentant wife, but by the hope that when Catherine saw how entirely his affections were given to Harriet, and how fully he was resolved to treat her as his wife, she would of her own accord forego her conjugal claims, and separate from him.

"And now, dearest Harriet," he said, "you have heard my scheme; does it find favour in your eyes?"

Harriet flung her arms round his neck, and exclaimed, passionately :

"Anything, my own precious husband; anything is better than to be severed from you. Anything which gives me hope of being yours again, is joy greater than I can express. But I do not, I cannot approve the plan you suggest; my ambition rises higher. I aspire to an undivided husband, to having you as mine entirely

unmistakably—and for ever. Into what a false and dreadful position would you plunge! A wife at St. Amand, and a reputed wife at Paris! In each place the question would soon arise inevitably, which was the lawful, which the unlawful spouse. Could you love me as your wife, yet permit me to be regarded as your mistress? What horrible suspicions would you bring on others, and what accumulated embarrassments on yourself!”

“If you remained in Paris, sweetest,” said Roland, “every visit I paid you would be espied and noted down, and the scandal would soon become notorious; but by adopting the plan I propose we may for a time elude public notice, and perhaps stimulate Catherine into such rage and indignation, that she will scorn to force her legal claims upon me any longer, and thus *nolens volens* leave us in peace. The one great point at which above all others I now aim, is to bring about, if in any way possible, a mutual separation; since by this means I should be absolved in the eyes of the world from my engagement

with Catherine, and also left free to fall back on my prior, and, as I now believe, indissoluble covenant with you. Thus, and thus only, can I save my honour and secure your happiness and my own. But what says lovely Lizzy to my plan? she, too, must be consulted in everything."

Next to his own Harriet and her children, there was no one whom Roland loved so much as Lizzy. He might well call her lovely, for in addition to external beauty, she had all that softness, sweetness, and playfulness of disposition which is peculiar to woman; and that strong, natural good sense which never fails to give dignity to the feminine character, and to invest it with irresistible charms and invincible might. He sat between her and Harriet on the couch; his right arm clasped the one sister, and his left was twined round the waist of the other, and the head of each lay warm, glossy, odorous, and beautiful on his anxious bosom, as he said:

"Speak, sweet Lizzy, and tell us what you think."

"I think, dearest Roland," she replied, "that the only ground on which you can separate from your reputed wife is high, very high ground, and that you should lose no time in taking it. A middle course is, in your case, full of danger, and safety lies in extremes. To remain where you are is sin, to fly, therefore, is virtue; to fly from sin is not cowardice but true valour. Will you bear with me, Roland, if I propose a counter project?"

"Yes," said Roland, "and give it the gravest consideration."

"Well then, Roland," continued Lizzy, "it is this. Take the two children out in the carriage for a drive; bring them here to see us at a fixed time. Tell the nurse-maid you will stay here perhaps half an hour. Desire her to buy you something at a distance in the meanwhile, that the carriage may be out of the way, and the coast clear; we will be all ready to start with two *voitures de remise*, the moment you arrive. Let us make for the station of the Chemin de Fer du Nord; let us take the first train for

Boulogne, and there embark for any port where we shall most readily find a steamer bound to New York. Oh! with what delight should I be transported, if I could see little Cyril and Agnes safe in Harriet's arms, and Harriet safe in yours; and watch the green crystal billows breaking and bounding from under the vessel's prow, and mark the long train of foam left in her wake, and bid farewell to the cliffs of Albion, fading away in the distance fainter and fainter, till they are lost in haze. Then, indeed, will a new world lie open before us, and invite us to its shores: a new world in which we may find and follow more easily than in the old, the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace. There, if you will only consent to fly, we shall be able to develope daily the moral and intellectual life of your little ones, unhampered and unbaffled by adverse circumstances. Yes, dear Roland, I counsel, since you permit me to counsel, flight, speedy—nay, immediate flight! Fly; oh, fly from temptation! Fly from Catherine Dashton—Elsmere I dare

not call her—fly from interminable worry, fly from public infamy, fly from complications, increasingly complex, fly from places full of painful associations, fly from Paris, fly from France, fly from England, fly from Europe, fly to America, to the new England, the second Europe, to a land where there is much to see, to explore, to learn, and to enjoy; where your thirst for travel may be slaked, and even your love of historical reminiscences gratified, where your harassed and jaded spirit may be recreated and refreshed, and, with a new world, may find also un hoped-for felicity, and new life. There, if you will have me as well as Harriet for your *compagnon de voyage*, we will mount or descend the mighty rivers—the Mississippi, the Missouri, and the Ohio, and pierce, it may be, into those vast wild forests that lie among the rocky mountains, and steam over the Lakes Erie, Superior, and Ontario, in that ‘Region of Lakes,’ where lakes, they say, are like seas, in that land of ‘Hiawatha,’ where savage and civilised life still

dispute the soil; there, we will drench in the spray of the thundering falls of Niagara, and, sailing southward, will visit, coast after coast, the sunny and golden lands illustrated by the memories of Columbus, Vespucci, Pizarro, and Cortez!"

"Yes, my sweet sage!" said Roland, kissing Lizzy, with fraternal fondness, "all this towards which your syren voice allures me, would be rapturous and blessed indeed. But before I can escape from my present straits, I must pass between Scylla and Charybdis. It might not be so easy as you suppose to get off the children, for Catherine is alert as a watch-dog, and has the eyes of a lynx! To depart for Boulogne, as you propose, and thence to take ship for New York, without being tracked and followed by Catherine, would, I believe, be next to impossible. The first point to be accomplished is the removal of the children, and when they are placed, as I shall tell her I intend to place them, under your care, it will be vastly more easy for

me to escape; and escape I most undoubtedly will, if I fail to bring about by previous measures a mutual separation."

Finding it impossible to dissuade Roland from his purpose, Harriet and Lizzy at last ceased to offer any further opposition. When Roland left them, late that evening, it was with the intention of carrying out his plan with regard to little Cyril and Agnes as soon as possible, and testing the truth or falsity of the popular aphorism, *mediotutissimus ibis*.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I hold that man the worst of public foes,
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house."

Tennyson's Idylls of the King.

It is a dismal point in the history of a wedded pair when they meet together with customary civilities and amenities, but are each of them conscious inwardly that the relation in which they stand to each other is essentially changed; that coldness has supervened upon their once ardent affections, and that love is, at least on one side, converted into dislike. With what pangs does the aching heart then acknowledge to

itself that the charms wherewith youthful imagination so richly invested matrimony are all dispelled, that its fondest and brightest hopes were an illusion and a dream!

Catherine and Roland Elsmere met at the breakfast table. Their conversation was frigid, desultory, and constrained. At length Roland said (and his words were like the sudden opening of a hostile battery):

"I have been thinking, for some days past, Catherine, how desirable it would be for me to place Cyril and Agnes under the care of their Aunt Lizzy!"

"The sister of your divorced wife?" demanded Catherine.

"Precisely so," replied Roland. "She is now in Paris, but is about to leave immediately; and it strikes me that such a golden opportunity ought not to be thrown away."

Catherine turned ghastly pale, and her countenance darkened with an expression of anger, indignation and menace, such as we may conceive was that of Cicero, when he launched the

thunderbolt of his oration, beginning: "How long then, Cataline, wilt thou abuse our patience? To what lengths will thy unbridled audacity plunge?"

"And pray when," she asked, "do you mean to follow your children yourself, and complete your conjugal apostacy?"

After a moment's pause, Roland replied, in a tone of regret, "Whenever you will consent to a separation, Catherine. I am satisfied of the sincerity of Harriet's contrition, and I see too plainly now, that I did wrong to marry again; indeed, I believe my second marriage to be null."

Catherine answered sternly, "And I believe that you greatly mistake the subject with whom you have to deal. Never, never will I consent to a separation; never will I sue you for one, however you may provoke me to it by your heartless infidelity! It is precisely what you would wish me to do. Your wish shall never be gratified. If you desert me, I will employ every engine of the law to compel your return. If you fly to any other land, I will track you by steam

and winds, by seas and rivers, by horse, or mule, or camel, or the caravans of the desert, until I find you; and that neither from love nor revenge, but simply to denounce your iniquity, and vindicate my violated and insulted rights. I call the God of heaven to witness that I will spend my time, my fortune, my influence, my strength of mind and body, in constraining you by force of circumstances to return to your duties as a husband, and in withering and blasting, till then, every one of your guilty enjoyments. Yes, I will be the sharpest thorn you ever had in your side. You ruthless, unprincipled, and unscrupulous villain! You monster and impersonation of selfishness! It is nothing to you to have ruined me, to have made me miserable for life, to have blighted all my prospects, to have made me a thousand fold more desolate than a widow, before the honeymoon is past! Did you not know before hand that your former wife might one day profess reformation; nay, that it was just within the bounds of possibility that her reformation might be sincere; for criminals

become weary of their crimes when the world persists in frowning on them? Yet, knowing this, did you not divorce her absolutely and for ever, and without reference to any contingency? If she still held, or ever could hold, any claim over you, why did you seek another alliance, assuring me, again and again, that she was to you as though she had never been, and that your heart (your heart! you heartless hypocrite!) was wholly given to me. You are now suddenly seized with trouble in your conscience. Unfortunately for you, no one believes in these violent fits of conscientiousness. They are commonly the prelude or the sequel to the basest of crimes. Who will be the next victim of your caprice? But a few weeks ago you were all eagerness to cull the flower which you now cast away as a vile weed. Then you could sigh and serenade like a troubadour, and make love like one who had never learned the art. Then I thought you a child of nature, and did not suspect that you were a stage-player. Then—”

“A truce, Catherine,” interrupted Roland,

"to these bitter invectives. Some of your charges against me are grossly unjust; but as to reproaches, you cannot reproach me more than I reproach myself."

"Your craven spirit," said Catherine, with scornful acrimony, "recoils from the first assault of truth! And when do you intend to remove your children?"

"This afternoon."

"Mean and cruel reprobate!" retorted Catherine, "I am too deeply disgusted to speak with you any more now."

She rose from the table, and left the room. Most women would have mingled their rage with weeping; but Catherine was unlike most women. She was too proud to weep in Roland's presence, and too masculine to shed tears yet, even though alone. Retiring to her boudoir, she wrote, without hesitation or delay, to the British Ambassador:—

"MY DEAR LORD,

"A very great and unexpected evil threatens my husband and myself. My confi-

dence in your friendship for us is such that I am sure you will, if you can, help us to avert the calamity.

"Could you oblige me by calling on me some time in the course of the morning? You may perhaps be able to render me an important service.

"Believe me to be, my dear Lord,

"Yours most faithfully,

"CATHERINE ELSMERE.

"To his Excellency the Right Honourable
Earl Oxenham."

"There," she said, as she rung for a footman to take the note immediately; "if the oily old world-worshipper can aid me, he will; and if not, I shall not lose anything by invoking his diplomacy."

Lord Oxenham was in his eightieth year. At the age of twenty he had been an *attaché*, and he had resided, in one diplomatic capacity or another, at almost every court in Europe. He could adapt himself, with the utmost facility, to the foreign policy of any ministry. Pitt or

Fox, Addington, Canning or Peel, Russell, Palmerston or Derby, "*Tros Tyriusve*" were all alike to him. He looked down upon their political differences with transcendental indifference, occupying himself, as he believed, a sublimer height, as representing, not a party in England, but England herself. He clung, therefore, to his foreign appointments, under all ministerial changes, with the lubricity of a Talleyrand, and the tenacity of a Vicar of Bray; and he was always inspired with the dominant and ennobling idea of the supremacy and superiority of England over all other lands. He was constantly singing and making melody in his heart to her honour and glory. "Rule Britannia! Britannia rules the waves!" The *Times* was his daily study. He regarded it as the repository of all attainable wisdom, and sometimes boasted that during fifty years he had read every number of the *Times* which had appeared. Far from admitting it to be the most tergiversating and unprincipled of journals, he contended that it was the most consistent and high-prin-

cipled of all, because it was always swayed by the feeling of the majority, and represented faithfully the existing phase of public opinion, to which he deemed it the part of reason and common sense to bow implicitly. Seldom has the world had a more zealous devotee than Lord Oxenham. The world, he used to say, with Charles Lamb, was shamefully calumniated, being a highly respectable, very agreeable, and very good kind of old world, after all. His manners were bland, and his address as affable as was by any means consistent with diplomatic dignity. He was, moreover, remarkably amiable, with an amiability, indeed, which might have graced a Pagan, but which was amiability, nevertheless, since he was at all times ready to do a kindness to any one, and to succour the aggrieved, provided that by doing so he did not come into violent collision with that propriety, expediency, and public approval which ruled all his actions. With these feelings and dispositions, it cannot be surprising to any one that Lord Oxenham was exceedingly popular. As he

preserved, in his old age, all the gallantry of his youth which was consistent with wrinkles and grey hairs, he was an especial favourite with the young and fair, who with one voice pronounced him "a dear—a darling old man."

Lord Oxenham did not fail to respond to Catherine Elsmere's call. He was shown into the drawing-room just as the two children were taking leave of their new mamma.

Catherine embraced them very frigidly, saying, "Good bye, dears," and nothing more.

"And where are my little pets going?" asked Lord Oxenham, holding out a hand to each of them.

"We are going to England with Aunt Lizzy," replied Cyril, the eldest.

Lord Oxenham looked at Catherine inquiringly.

"*Dieu sait,*" she said, "*où ils vont, Milord. Ils ne le savent pas eux-mêmes, les pauvres petits, ni moi non plus. Je vais vous en parler tout à l'heure.*"

The children quitted the room. Catherine

and her visitor watched while their nurse handed them into the carriage. They drove towards the Hotel du Louvre, where they would be received by Lizzy alone; Roland purposely abstained from accompanying them, lest he should give occasion to Catherine to pursue or reconnoitre.

"Well, my dear," said Lord Oxenham, as soon as the carriage had disappeared, "what is the matter? How can I serve you?"

In sad but unfaltering tones, Catherine recounted her grievances, the arts, as she called them, of the abandoned Harriet, the credulity of her husband, his real or pretended religious scruples, his desire for a separation, his removal of the children, and his expected desertion.

"Can you help me, Lord Oxenham," she concluded, "or counsel me, so that this dreadful disgrace and misery may be averted from him and myself?"

"Depend upon it, my dear," said Lord Oxenham, "I will do everything for you that I can. Certainly, if Elsmere should be so foolish and headstrong, he will be lost to society, and the blast of

public opinion will wither his fame for ever. I will endeavour to deter him from this fatal course as soon as ever a suitable opportunity presents itself. But how little will the words of an old man like me avail, if he is bewitched by a beautiful sorceress.

“Love rules the court, the camp, the field.”

Love, my dear Mrs. Elsmere, is the mighty master of human actions, and, though unseen and often unsuspected, directs a far larger portion of them than we commonly suppose. If this woman has entangled him in her net, we shall find it difficult to extricate him.”

“I cannot but suspect,” said Catherine, “that she is even now in this neighbourhood, and that Roland has seen her. He has been frequently to the Hotel du Louvre of late, and though he pretends that he has sent his children there to the care of his sister-in-law only, I do not believe it.”

“I would advise you, my dear, carefully to avoid whatever might drive Elsmere from you.

By all means save appearances, if you can; his former wife being wanton by nature, she will in all probability prove true to her character and false to her divorced husband. He will then feel how unwisely and ill he has acted towards you, and his affections will revert to their former channel the more readily and fondly, from the fact of your having been lenient to his faults. Having eyes, therefore, see not; and having ears, hear not. That is, in my opinion, your prudent plan."

"But the scandal, Lord Oxenham!"

"It must be avoided if possible; keeping secrets is, as you know, a part of my calling. You have nothing, therefore, to fear from my gossippings; I shall be as ignorant as a babe unborn of any misunderstanding between you and Elsmere. Confide your trouble to no one else, for few can be trusted. I have several times in my life slept in a room alone for a week together, lest I should talk in my sleep of some diplomatic secret, which at the moment pre-occupied me very greatly. Then again, if scandal should

arise the blame will not fall on you, but on the contrary, the world in general would sympathize with you as innocent and injured."

"A thousand thanks, Lord Oxenham," said Catherine, "for your kind and good counsel; but will you not now see what you can do with my wilful husband?"

"No, my dear, I must wait for a more convenient season. I have made it a rule through life never to interfere in affairs which do not immediately concern me; advice unasked for is seldom accepted or acceptable. If I were to force mine upon Elsmere in his present excited state of mind he would resent it; but it is not at all unlikely that he may open the subject to me of his own accord, and in this case I shall be prepared. Meanwhile you will try without exasperating him, to impress upon his mind the ar-rant folly of running counter to the opinion of the world in general, and that, practically speaking there is a higher tribunal than either law or religion, and that is—public opinion. As to his

recent scruples of conscience, that you know, my dear, is worthy of Mawworm or Tartuffe. I have always observed that when men are going to do something singularly base they begin to talk about God."

CHAPTER XIV.

Sunt mobiles ad superstitionem percussæ semel mentes.

Minds once shaken are prone to superstition.

Tacitus.—Annals, Book 1.

THE shades of evening were slowly creeping over the land when the last train from the capital stopped at the little station of Loupcamp. It was an ugly and dreary looking place, in which the chief object of repulsion was a huge dingy *Fabrique de coton*, which had once been the commodious and uncomely country house of the bishop of the diocese in days when the church was rich. A gloomy thought—vague

fore-cast of desolation and ruin—shot through Roland's brain as he stood on the platform and eyed this uninviting prospect; but his glances fell the next moment on the beloved face of his recovered Harriet, and the music of his children's prattle struck upon his ear, and he smiled again in gladness and in hope. There were still three miles between them and St. Amand; and the two carriages which he had ordered from the neighbouring town to convey them to their journey's end were not in attendance punctually. In the few minutes which elapsed before their arrival, Roland entered the office to make some inquiries, and as he passed the door, a tall, dark-bearded figure, cloaked, booted and spurred, brushed by him, muttering what seemed to be imprecations. Roland turned sharply round but did not succeed in getting a full view of the man's countenance. So far as he glimpsed his features, they appeared to be not altogether unfamiliar to him, but he could not distinctly identify them with those of any one whom he knew.

The vehicles having arrived, the two children with two newly-engaged French servants were sent on before, while Roland and Harriet, with Lizzy Monteagles, followed. They had not proceeded more than half a mile, when they heard the quick trot of a heavy-footed steed behind them; and in an instant Roland, looking through the window of the covered *voiture*, saw the dark figure mounted and now close to the carriage. He checked his horse for a moment, and then rode briskly. The moon shone brightly, but the rider's hat was slouched over his forehead, and his face so muffled in his cloak that it could not be seen.

"I wonder whether that man is dodging us?" said Roland.

"Why in the world should he be dodging us, dear?" asked Harriet.

"That is more than I can tell. I only know that he passed me on the platform of the station muttering curses, perhaps on himself, perhaps on some one else, perhaps on me."

"Did you ever see the man before, dearest Roland?"

"Never, that I know of."

"I dare say," said Lizzy, smiling placidly as she was wont, "he has been out hunting all day, and is going home very tired and cross because the dogs have lost the scent, and the poor animal has escaped free."

"He doesn't look as if he had been hunting," replied Roland, "with a hat on, and that long clumsy cloak."

And here they fell on talking about hunting and wild bears, and how they devastate the peasants' gardens, and travel sometimes ten or twelve leagues in a night, and tear off the arms of defenceless labourers in the fields, and gore and slay the voracious hounds, and rend open the thighs of the too venturous leaders of the chase.

It matters little to lovers *what* they talk of; it is enough for them that they do talk, that they hear the sweet sound of each other's voices, and watch the sweet play of each other's fea-

tures, and read the sweet language of each other's amorous eyes. And so it was with Roland and Harriet, who now seemed to love as freshly and fondly, as if their vows had never been broken. Strange that the valves of Roland's heart should have opened so wide to receive back one who *had* been untrue to him. Yet so it was; let none say 'it is unnatural, it could never be.' It has been, and it will be again; for the manifestations of human affection are infinitely various. Every man has an idiosyncrasy: Roland Elsmere had his.

Love's chit-chat was soon interrupted. The drivers pulled up at a little inn called *Au Bon Repos*, probably with no other object than that of drinking a cup by the way. Hearing a rustic violin in full scrape, Roland alighted to see what was going on. In one large room of the *auberge* a goodly number of village youths and maidens were dancing quadrilles with exactitude and moderate decorum. In the other room, which served the treble purpose of a huxter's shop, pork-butcher's shop, and hostelry, was a motley scene.

There was the landlord in his shirt-sleeves and spectacles sitting before a littered table, and by the help of a dim guttering tallow-candle spelling a little provincial newspaper; there was a shepherd boy who had fallen in with a tired hound, and was taking him home in hope of reward; a slip-shod wench was weighing sausages, three or four waggoners and boors were smoking pipes and regaling themselves with sour cider; a half-drunken soldier was roaring at the top of his voice a couplet of a *chant patriotique*:

“Mon opinion c'est qu', nom d' un chien,
Nous allons brosser l' Autrichien,”

and opposite the open door sat the man in the long cloak with his face towards the fire, and beside him, on a small table, a bottle of cognac, into which he seemed to be making large inroads. But the drivers had remounted; the first *voiture* was off, and the second waited for Roland. He stepped in, and almost immediately their road was skirted on either hand by a dark wood. Again they heard, and not without a momentary

misgiving, the smart and heavy trot of a steed close behind. But no time was left for conjecture. The dark ruffian was beside the carriage window. Every part of his face that could be seen in the tree-broken moonlight was smeared and completely disguised with charcoal. Throwing aside the folds of his mantle, he pointed a revolver at Roland. The first bullet shattered the pane of glass, lost itself, and lodged somewhere in the wood-work of the *voiture*; the second passed through Roland's hat, the third smashed his gold watch, and then turned aside, and ran round his right ribs, only grazing the skin; and the fourth never went off at all. The sisters screamed, but Roland, lowering the glass and putting his head out, saw the assassin galloping back, and cried to the coachman, "*Allons, dépêchons nous; tout va bien, je ne suis que légèrement blessé.*"

"Wounded!" exclaimed Harriet, tearing open her husband's coat and waiscoat, "and where my Roland, where?"

Seeing his shirt tinged with blood all around

one side, Harriet was almost fainting with grief and terror.

"Don't be frightened, dearest Harriet," said Roland, "it is but a scratch. I felt the bullet fall harmlessly down my spine. But who could have fired at me? He was evidently not a robber, or he would have demanded money. Who can he be? I have no enemies that I know of in France, not one, except it be—but no—God forbid!—I can hardly think it of her, furious as she is against me now—except it be Catherine. Has she employed this wretch to slay me? Do you think she can carry vengeance so far?"

"I do not know her," replied Harriet; "I cannot judge. God be praised for this, at least, that your wound is slight."

"It is slight," said Roland, "nevertheless, it is a great misfortune. It inspires me with the darkest doubts and suspicions of Catherine. This alone is a torment. Nothing is more perplexing and harassing than suspicion, whether of friend or foe."

"But, Roland, dear," said Lizzy, "You are not

likely to be long in a state of suspense. Justice is well administered here. It would not be difficult, I should think, to apprehend this villain. You have only to give all the information you can to the police. They will telegraph in all directions, and he will most likely be apprehended within three days."

"True," replied Roland; "but unfortunately this is precisely what I wish to avoid. I deeply deplore this dreadful accident, because it is likely to bring my name before the public, and to frustrate my scheme of locating you all quietly at St. Amand for a while, and pressing Catherine by degrees into a voluntary separation. I fear the whole neighbourhood will be talking of this affair to-morrow, but I shall avoid to the utmost taking any steps that might lead to an apprehension."

"Do not say so, dearest Roland," exclaimed Harriet; "for unless you detect and prosecute this assassin, your life may be again in danger."

"True," he replied; "that thought—and a very unpleasant one it is—did not strike me. Howbeit, I shall arm myself, and be on my guard, especially when in this neighbourhood."

Roland became moody. Gloomy reflections took possession of his mind. He began to fancy that the Divine hand was against him. That a counter-current of ills would set in, whatever he attempted or planned, and that he had become like that Sisera, of whom the Scripture says, that the stars in their courses fought against him.*

Strong minds scorn such superstitious imaginations, weak minds fall a prey to them, and minds which are neither very strong nor very weak, struggle against them with more or less valour and success. Woe to the man who allows any irrational and dominant idea to take possession of him, for in doing so he treads on the very verge of insanity, though he knows it not himself, nor as yet any other being suspects it.

* Judges, v. 20.

Leaving the high road, they drove up an avenue of young elms, flanked on the one side by orchards, and on the other by fields of turnip and beet-root, and soon reached the gates of the gloomy chateau of St. Amand.

CHAPTER XV.

Alas, great nations have great shames, I say.
No pity, O world, no tender utterance
Of benediction, and prayers stretched this way
For poor Italia, baffled by mischance ?
O gracious nations, give some ear to me !

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

ROLAND'S stay at St. Amand was short. Before he returned to Paris, his fond Harriet promised to write him every particular of her daily life, nor was she slow in fulfilling her engagement. Her first letter was as follows :—

“ MY DEAREST HUSBAND,

“ Every hour without you seems a day, even though I am cheered in your absence by the

sweet society of Lizzy and my lovely children. Cyril and Agnes, resemble you so closely in their features and in their ways, that I fancy I am not altogether without you when they are with me. It seems to me that they are in some sort reduplicates of yourself, and that in them you multiply yourself, and come to me in miniature, and speak to my heart. Blessings on family likenesses, for they are links of love.

“Scarcely had you left us yesterday, when Cyril ran up to me and asked: ‘Mamma, who is that lady in a veil they wheel round the park in the morning?’ Not knowing what he was talking about, I inquired of his nurse, who said, ‘It is a lady we see from the nursery window when the children are dressing. The servants here call her Mademoiselle Cyr. They say that nobody living has ever seen her face; she lives close to the lodge, and the gardener has wheeled her round the park every morning before breakfast since we arrived, though he did so after breakfast before we came. She is never allowed to go out of sight of the chateau. She is very harmless,

they say, and very inquisitive. They often find her creeping about stealthily and listening at the doors after sun-set.'

"You may well suppose that my curiosity was excited by these particulars, and when the Baronne came to pay us her usual morning visit, I said to her, 'You have an invalid living at the chateau, I think?'

" 'Yes, indeed,' she replied; 'that is to say, one who has been a great invalid. Poor Made-moiselle Cyr; she is a daughter of a very highly-valued housekeeper of the old Baron, who lived in England, and who, in his will, provided that she should be maintained at my husband's charge. She once had a severe attack of erysipelas, and during the malady her face became so distorted by violent contractions of the nerves that she has ever since worn a veil. She is quite isolated, poor thing, for it is painful to her to talk; but we let her wander about the precincts of the chateau, and even go to one of the upper rooms to amuse herself, if she can. She is wholly inoffensive, and you may depend

on her never causing you the slightest annoyance.'

"All this runs very smoothly, yet I suspect there is some mystification in the matter. I have been told that it is only by accident that French people ever tell the truth.

"So much for the morning. In the afternoon, while Madame de Barrère was trying hard to get us to admire her flowers, and we were watching, rather for her pleasure than ours, the stunted gold and silver fish in the cracked, rain-worn, muddy, weedy, formal artificiality in front of the chateau, she told us they were expecting a visit from a young Italian, 'a very interesting man in his way,' Signor Scipio Safi.

"Lizzy's eyes sparkled, and she said, 'An Italian! Then I suppose he is a patriot?'

"'Oh, yes, my dear,' replied the Baronne, 'You may be quite sure he is a patriot; all those young men in Italy are. In fact, he is an *Italianissimo*. He is brimful of Italy, and running over with Italy. He talks of Italy by the hour, he raves about Italy, writes about

Italy, sings of Italy, and dreams of Italy by night and by day.'

" 'What a nice man!' Lizzy exclaimed, 'how I should like to see him. And what is he doing here?'

" 'He is staying now,' said the old lady, 'as he does yearly, with a neighbour of ours, Monsieur de la Touche. He generally walks over to us two or three times a week to have a chat with my husband. They don't agree at all on politics but they are both fond of history, so they get on very well. Then the Curé drops in sometimes, and we make up a quiet rubber. Signor Saffi cannot take arms, as I suppose he would wish, in consequence of a blow he received under the right eye, which has materially enfeebled its sight. Happily he has a small fortune. But if, my dear, you had asked me who he is, I should not have been able to tell you. Nobody knows who he is; he does not know it himself. He has no relations, not one in the world, so far as he can tell. He has no remembrance of father or mother, sister or brother. His earliest recol-

lections are of a nurse, whom he says he loved very much, and from whose care he passed to a succession of schools, ending with a university. My husband says he cannot answer for both his parents, but he is quite sure one of them must have been of gentle blood, because he has such delicate little ears, and well-formed feet and hands. But here he comes, and you shall hear him speak for himself.' Lizzy says she felt almost afraid to look at him, after all she had just heard, lest she should like him too much.

"As he approached us, coming up the grass-grown carriage drive, and took off his hat, it was impossible not to admire the intellectual expanse of his forehead, and benevolent expression of his Raphael-like face. He is rather tall, composed, and graceful, and his upper lip is covered with a small jet-black moustache, which has evidently never been either curled or shaven.

"After the usual *niaiseries* of incipient discourse, the Baronne said: 'Signor Safi, you told me one day at which of the Italian Uni-

versities you studied, but I have forgotten the name of it.'

" 'Pisa,' replied Safi, 'quiet and well-beloved Pisa!'

" 'And why so well-beloved, Signor Safi? Are the Pisan ladies fairer than those of other cities?'

" 'The young ladies of Pisa,' he rejoined without a smile, 'are fair, no doubt; but I became enamoured of their mother.'

" 'Their mother!'

" 'Yes, Madame; for it was there I first learned that their mother and mine—my mother Italy—once great and queenly, was now lying wounded and bleeding in manacles and fetters. There also I first learned to distinguish between her friends and foes, between those who maintained that Italy belongs to the people—to the Italians—and those who held that she was the property—the hereditary fief—of some half-dozen crowned heads!'

" 'Doctrine of Mazzini, Lamennais, and Ledru Rollin!' muttered the Baron, who had joined us.

'But I did not mean to interrupt you, Safi. Pray proceed.'

" 'And how came it,' asked Lizzy, 'that you never knew till then that Italy was your mother?'

" 'Alas ! when I was a child I had no patriot parents, no Italian-hearted relations or friends to teach me the lesson ; and at the schools to which I was sent it was the last thing my instructors would have wished me to learn. It was the policy of my rulers to repress to the utmost that national sentiment which so ennobles man.'

" 'And who tempted you to eat of the forbidden fruit at Pisa?'

" 'It was from a foreigner that I learned to know my own country. He told me to pluck the fruit, to eat of the tree. He opened my eyes to my country's good and evil, to her charms and glories, her sorrows and her wrongs !'

" 'Was he an Englishman?'

" 'No, Mademoiselle ; an Englishman might well have taught me the lesson ; but not perhaps with so much fresh ardour. The English enjoy

liberty as a birthright, the Greeks as a conquest.'

" 'He was a Greek then?'

" 'Yes; he was the son of the Sultan's Greek physician at Constantinople. At an early age he left his father's home, and put himself on board a Greek merchant vessel bound for Athens, preferring rather to live by the labour of his hands in a free country, than to eat the bread of servitude and degradation. From Athens he had contrived to migrate to Pisa for the completion of his education. His memory was richly stored with the eventful history of Greece, in her recent struggles for independence against the Moslem power. An ardent friendship sprung up between us day by day, as each day's sun declined; while we wandered together up and down the Lung' Arno, or in the lengthening shadows of the beauteous Duomo and Baptistery and Leaning Tower, or through the Casine and pine forest which separate Pisa from the sea, did Nestor Damodos instruct and delight me by his vivid recital of the glorious achievements of the heroes, statesmen, and patriots of Greece in

latter days—the Stratarch and Leonidas-like Marcos-Botzaris, the president Mavrocordato, and other kindred spirits who followed in their illustrious steps. Then he used to explain to me how, when his countrymen had vanquished the Turks, a delicate and difficult task yet remained to be accomplished at home; how freedom from the Sultan was but half freedom, so long as the people, unrepresented in a parliament, and defrauded of a constitution, were governed by a child; and that child not a Greek, but a Bavarian. Then he would teach me to recite Romaic war songs, and often as we lay beneath the fir trees on a carpet of moss, violets, and anemones, would repeat, with enthusiastic emphasis, in English, Italian, and modern Greek, those most thrilling and powerful lines of Byron—

“The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece,
Where burning Sappho loved and sung.”

Then he would say: ‘And you too, my friend, you have a country; one that almost rivals mine in ancient splendour, and outshines it in all the

glories of modern civilization, as a planet out-shines a star.' Then—but I weary you, ladies, with my rhodomontade. When once I begin about Italy I am the most prolix of men; I can start from any point on the subject, but I never know where to end.'

"We all (except the Baron, who looked very glum), protested we were far from being tired, and entreated him to continue.

"Under Nestor's guidance, then, I made myself acquainted by degrees with the history of my country. I learned how, after centuries of foreign and barbarian occupation, after having been ravaged and broken up by the successive invasions of the Heruli, the Ostrogoths, the Greeks and the Lombards, she still retained her national features; and Italy, though divided and degraded, was Italy still. I learned to regard division as the evil genius of Italy—her curse and her shame! I saw her seven hundred years after the holy Apostles of liberty had visited her shores, and shed their blood for her emancipation, writhing under the resistless irruptions of alien hordes,

and subjugated afresh by her new *friends* (ten thousands anathemas on such friendship!)—her *friends*, the Franks. I saw her—thanks, equal thanks to her aggressors and *deliverers*—her, who should have been one, debilitated and broken into three; into Frank-Italy, Lombard-Italy, and Greek-Italy, each striving with rival interests against the others, yet all together unable to exterminate the national element which was rooted in her very soil, deep and immoveable as the Apennines. I was prepared to regard her powerful friends as special foes, as wolves in sheep's clothing, as ravens and vultures in the plumage of doves, when I marked even the noblest and most generous kings of France—Pepin and Charlemagne—making their zeal for the honour and security of the Roman pontiff a means of advancing their own rapacious and ambitious projects; when I beheld my country bound hand and foot, and made a tributary kingdom, a province, an appanage of the Empire of the West. Italy crowned the Frank Emperors of the West with the iron crown since kept at Monza, and

they in return crowned Italy with a crown of thorns. The Frank domination over us was succeeded by a German protectorate still more oppressive. In the tenth century, as in the nineteenth, under Otho I. and Henry III. of Germany, as under Francis, Ferdinand, and Francis Joseph of Austria, the traditional policy of the Germans towards Italy was one of systematic oppression. We owe them a debt of hatred, and we pay it.

“The eleventh century brought us a fresh army of locusts. Allured by the luxuriant fertility of Italy, the Normans settled in our plains and valleys, and set up the kingdom of the two Sicilies. O my God! is it because in pagan times the Italian legions went everywhere throughout the world conquering and to conquer; is it, therefore, that in Thy retributive providence Thou hast doomed us, their Christian progeny, to be subjugated, even as they did subjugate; to be overrun from north to south, age after age, by all nations that compass us round about?

“Then—since you, ladies, so kindly listen to me with patience—then, as I read and searched, Nestor would point out to me how, in addition to oppression from without, and division within, we were ever groaning under a third great national evil, which our enemies most assiduously encouraged, namely, dissensions, feuds, and wars among ourselves. The heart-burning struggle between the Guelphs and Ghibelins, the partisans respectively of the popes and the emperors, which lasted more than a century, was succeeded by the creation of numerous petty, rival, and often tyrant-ruled republics. Naples and Sicily were severed for two hundred years. Milan and Savoy were duchies. Venice, Ferrara, Mantua, and Tuscany ruled and fought apart. All forces were developed, but the force of forces—cohesion. During seventy years French intrigue, to the dishonour of Italy, retained the rulers of Rome half guests, half prisoners, at Avignon. The popes themselves disintegrated Italy politically, as they do to this day. They were too weak to unite her, too strong to let her unite.’

"I do not know how long Signor Safi would have continued his sketch of the history and wrongs of Italy, if a clap of thunder and a heavy fall of big rain-drops had not driven us from our seats under the chesnut tree, and compelled us to return to the chateau. There we parted; but knowing how fond Lizzy is of hearing about Italy, I told Signor Safi I hoped we should soon have the pleasure of seeing him again, and of hearing him resume a subject in which we felt great interest.

"I have done my best not to commit blunders in repeating to you what he said; and Lizzy has assisted my memory. She is charmed beyond measure with his enthusiasm, coupled as it is with extreme composure.

"I count the days and the hours, dearest Roland, till I see that face of yours, which is the sun of my existence. When shall I bask continually in its light? When shall we meet to part no more till death part us? Make haste, my beloved, and return to the bosom which yearns only for you.

"HARRIET ELSMERE."

CHAPTER XVI.

Yet, Italy! through every other land
Thy wrongs should ring, and shall, from side to side;
Mother of arts, as once of arms, thy hand
Was then our guardian, and is still our guide;
Parent of our religion, whom the wide
Nations have knelt to for the keys of heaven!
Europe, repentant of her parricide,
Shall yet redeem thee.

Byron's Childe Harold.

It was not to be supposed that Scipio Safi would long defer his visit to Mrs. Elsmere, and—though last, not least—Lizzy Monteagles. The fair-complexioned daughter of free Albion would have had attractions for him, even if he had

not heard her speak. But her lips had spoken, and she had expressed an interest in his country, which to him was dearer than his life. "And is she, indeed," he asked, "that bright and blessed being—for I doubt not that there is one—who was destined milleniums ago to mingle with my being, and to mould my fate? Will she, through her virtues, her talents, and her beauty, be to me as a gorgeous and richly-furnished palace, at whose portals I have only knocked as yet, ~~nor knocked, perhaps, in vain?~~"

Was there no counterpart to these questionings in the breast of Lizzy, gentle, thoughtful Lizzy? Were her slumbers unbroken? Did her beauteous head lie motionless and unturned on its pillow? Did no mellifluous voice ring in her ears through the passages of the night? Did no vision of a young and noble-hearted patriot haunt her in her dreams? Might not a close observer have seen her more pensive than was her wont, and often absent? and did not her greatest pleasure consist in talking with her sister about their interview with Scipio Saff?

Only one entire day passed before "a spirit in his feet" brought Safi to the alluring presence. He was soon constrained, and anything but against his will, to resume the subject which the thunder-storm had broken off. "The enemies of Italy," he said, "in every age, knowing the richness and variety of her inherent resources, have carefully prevented her ever uniting her scattered forces, lest, by doing so, she should become more than a match for the most puissant, and should rise into her proper dignity as a mistress, if not the mistress, among nations. In the sixteenth century, France, Germany, and Spain had succeeded in parceling out our fair inheritance between them, and Venice alone remained independent. Then, as in other ages, 'the fatal gift of beauty' was Italy's ruin. The seventeenth century deprived the Spaniards of some portion of that preponderance which they had acquired among us, and the eighteenth entirely destroyed it. But could Italy rejoice therein? Hardly; for the domination of Spain was supplanted by another more

formidable and remorseless, and the Milanese and the two Sicilies passed into the hands of Austria. The face of an Italian reddens with rage and shame when he hears the word Austria. To his conception, it includes in itself every idea of systematic and cruel oppression,—the more cruel because it is inflicted by those whose national religion is identical with our own, and who, consequently, have not the excuse, if excuse it be, of their political antagonism being exacerbated by religious differences.”

“But are not most of the leading Italian patriots infidels?” asked Lizzy. “I have always been told that the *Illuminati*, while they boast of the light of reason, generally scorn that of revelation.”

“There are infidels among them, no doubt,” replied Safi; “but that the majority of Italian patriots are so I utterly disbelieve. All Italians, who are not *employés* or under the direct influence of a corrupt or despotic government, are patriots at heart; all would love to see her united, all would rejoice to see her liberated from

the yoke of the stranger, yet no one who has travelled in Italy can doubt for a moment that the people are devotedly attached to their religion."

"And you, Signor Safi?"

"I am a Christian. Indeed, my refusal to regard scepticism as the proper ally of patriotism has cost me the use of my right eye."

"And how did this happen, Signor Safi? Do tell us."

"I was sitting one day in a café on the Lung' Arno at Pisa, and talking (for in Tuscany one could talk more or less) about Italian affairs with an acquaintance lately arrived from Turin, when he broke away from the political aspect of our subject, and began to inveigh vehemently against the Christian religion as an imposture, which, if properly assailed and exposed, would die away of itself. 'Protestantism,' he said, 'was but an offshoot of the fatal plant of Judæa; that great upas tree must be torn up by the roots; and its roots were now, as of old, in the Mons Vaticanus.'

"I warmly expressed my dissent from these Voltairian opinions, whereupon my opponent became angry, irritating, offensive, and, at last insulting.

" 'You a patriot!' he exclaimed, with a look and tone of ineffable contempt; 'you a defender of your country! In the hour of trial your craven spirit would fail you. You would be sure to betray your comrades to some pompous *Monsignore*, and run and hide yourself behind the cassock of some juggling priest!'

"My indignation was beyond all bounds. I rose. He rose also. I demanded that he should retract those words. He spit in my face.

" 'Swords or pistols?' I asked.

" 'Swords!' he replied.

" 'When?'

" 'Immediately!'

" 'Where?'

" 'Here!'

" 'Let us retire into an inner room,' I said, 'and send for weapons!'

"We were followed by a few friends, and were soon engaged in deadly combat. Not wishing

to slay, but only to scratch or prick my adversary *hors de combat*, I kept on the defensive. He made a rapid succession of furious lunges, all of which I parried with success—all except the last. His sword, beaten upward too feebly by a back stroke, slid along the blade of mine, and broke its point on my cheek-bone, just under the right eye. The eye-ball started half out of its socket. The pain was agonising. Inflammation followed. I was in bed for weeks in a darkened room. My feats of arms were all at an end. The purpose of my life was frustrated. One half-hour of anger and wounded pride had robbed me of my career of glory. Again and again I have sought to serve even as a private soldier in the cause of my country, but no army surgeon will admit me into a regiment, in consequence of the impaired vision which I owe to that unhappy duel. A duellist is a poor champion of Christianity! But I have been long and bitterly punished. To return to my history. In 1735, or thereabout, two younger branches of the Bourbon line were established on the thrones

of Parma and the two Sicilies. Thus monarchies affiliate; and if the sovereignty of the people were not sometimes brought into collision with that of the King, nation after nation would, through such affiliations, become dependent on the interests and caprices of a few reigning families.

“Why should I speak of subsequent degradations? Alas! you are too familiar with them. Under the Empire, the whole of Italy, except Sicily and the island of Sardinia, bowed under four different titles, to the will of Napoleon, and the life blood of her youth was drained, by continual conscriptions, to glut his insatiable thirst for conquest. The strongest and bravest of her children, who might have fought the battles of her redemption, fell wounded and famished on Russian snows, and their bones whitened the wolf-haunted banks of the Berezina. Napoleon fell; and, by the treaty of 1815, the powers of Europe mercilessly delivered us over to Austria bound hand and foot. For nearly forty-five years we have been her slaves. By force and

intrigue, by fortresses, armed occupations, bribery, *espionage*, and secret treaties, she has made herself virtually mistress of the entire peninsula. Revolts and revolutions on our part have too often served only to consolidate her power, and our hopes rest no longer on the sword alone. A constitutional monarchy has taken root among us, which, if Providence is kind to Italy, is destined by the free choice of the people, to absorb into itself one Italian province after another, till all are united under one sceptre, and one parliament. Happy are they, ladies, who live under the shelter of such a constitution as that of Great Britian. It is a tree whose branches drop continual blessings, whose boughs are laden with the richest fruit."

"I am so glad," said Lizzy, "to hear you speak thus of the British Constitution. Its praises are welcome from any lips, but especially from those of a foreigner. Women are not expected to know much of politics, but I have always fancied that our government is the perfection of political wisdom."

"It is, indeed," replied Safi, "for it responds to three principles all deeply inherent in human nature—the monarchical, the aristocratic, and the democratic—and it blends and harmonises these distinct elements in so happy a manner, that each is a check on the excesses of the other two. It is the growth of ages; we cannot hope to rival, but we may imitate it. Can you wonder that so many thousands of my fellow-country men are willing at every call to shed their blood for Italy, when you consider how great are the political blessings which other lands enjoy, and of which we, with at least equal claim to them, have so long been studiously deprived?"

"I wonder not," said Lizzy; "my only surprise is, that your women also, as well as your men, do not gird themselves for the battle, like the maid of Saragossa, and Joan of Arc."

"Alas! for Spartan mothers," said Safi; "in our days they are few. Servitude has made us degenerate, especially in Southern Italy. The moral character of a people depends greatly on the nobility, and justice, and freedom, of their

political institutions. A nation becomes of a surety the counterpart of its rulers. Despotism engenders slavery and rebellion. Disaffection and insubordination, though often unavoidable, and a people's misfortune rather than fault, are, when they become normal, highly injurious to morality. An inquisitorial system of *espionage* and police results in secret societies and clubs, and fosters every kind of hypocrisy, deceit, and craft. Innumerable abuses, corruptions, and social evils take root and multiply, under governments where freedom of speech is suppressed, which if brought fairly to the test of public opinion, a free press, and open tribunals, would dwindle and die away. Despotism jeopardises not only our material, but even our moral and spiritual interests, and not ours only, but those of our brethren, our children, our posterity. And, therefore, it is that it sometimes becomes our duty to rise in arms against the sovereign who has long been deaf to all remonstrance, and to compel him to accede to reasonable terms, or hurl him from his throne. Many a rebel, I believe,

dies a martyr and goes to a martyr's reward; for he fights not for himself, but for his neighbour and his God; he offers his life as a sacrifice on the altar of liberty and of justice."

Lizzy's heart throbbed with admiration of the man whose lips gave vent to such noble and patriotic sentiments.

"And how," she asked, with that curiosity which is the pioneer of affection—"how did you propose to serve your country, when you found that you could no longer take arms?"

"I strove," replied Safi, "to make my mind an arsenal, and to store it full of weapons and ammunition for the warfare of thought and principles. I made liberty my study. I traced the history of nations from barbaric times, and marked how in each, as Christian civilisation advanced, the power of a sovereign became limited by the common sense of the people expressed by their deputies in legislative assemblies. Hence I regarded civil liberty as one of the precious fruits of Christianity, as a necessary development of those principles of clemency,

justice, and equality, which the Gospel pro-
pounds. From the study of emancipated
nations, I passed to that of emancipating and
virtuous citizens. I stretched my right hand
to each of them, across the gulf of time and
death, and exclaimed—‘ My friend, my brother !’
my spirit rose in indignation with the spirit of
Kosciuszko, when Stanislas Poniatowski basely
accepted a convention which delivered up his
kingdom into the claws of the Russian Bear; and
I followed him, in thought, to the battle-field of
Wraclawice, when, at the head of his patriot
hosts, he rushed victoriously on the Russian
hordes; and my spirit, alas! sunk and saddened
within me when I saw him overcome by the
combined forces of Russia and Prussia, and fall-
ing pierced with many wounds, and crying
Finis Poloniae!—an end of Poland. I went
to Altorf. I trod literally in the footsteps of
‘ William,’ as my Swiss guide, with fond sim-
plicity, always called the immortal Tell. I
lodged in an hotel which looked upon the *place*
where he refused to render homage to ensigns

of tyranny, and was condemned to shoot away the apple from the head of his son. I embarked on the Lake of Lucerne from the self-same and ever-venerated stone, from which, more than five hundred years ago, he sprung into the boat that was to convey him to the fortress of Kussnacht. I knelt in the memorial-chapel erected over the spot where he laid in wait for Gesler in the hollow road that led to Kussnacht, and slew him with an arrow from his unerring bow; I knelt, and praying said, 'O God of clemency and of justice! raise up a Tell for Italy. Raise up a Tell among the Apennines, as Thou didst among the Alps; for Austria is Austria still!'

"Fired by the heroic examples and lives of such men as Washington and Tell, I resolved to remove to Naples, where I had friends, and there to seek some opportunity of propagating among my countrymen the sacred principles of civil liberty. I became insensibly the nucleus of a formidable party. A large number of young men, all eager for the political redemption of Italy, conspired to regard me as their

chief. Being fond of chemistry, I fitted up one of my rooms as a laboratory, but rather with a literary than a scientific design. My retorts and receivers, flasks and phials, minerals and alkalis, operations and experiments, served chiefly as a blind for the communication of electric thought. Amid the litter of chemical apparatus, I had a press which could easily be taken to pieces, types, reams of paper, and everything requisite for printing. Every suspicious article was procured at different times, from different tradesmen, and by different members of my clique. I became editor of a small weekly paper entitled *La Semenza*, and numbered among my contributors some of the ablest men in Naples. Liberty, under various aspects, was our unique and inspiring theme; nor did we fail to impart to our readers whatever facts, suppressed in the official journals, seemed to bear on our position, our prospects, and our hopes. *La Semenza* succeeded beyond all expectation, and was widely, though secretly, circulated. Assistance of every kind poured in

upon us, and we sowed the seeds of truth and freedom with enthusiasm and delight.

“Alas! a series of disasters soon blighted the promise of our scheme. A too garrulous Naples correspondent of a Paris paper, having heard of *La Semenza*, was so indiscreet as to mention it in one of his gossiping epistles. This betrayed us. No sooner had it appeared in *Le Siècle*, than information was telegraphed to the Minister of the Interior in Naples, and the vigilance of the police—an army of spies—was fully awakened. This was the beginning of troubles. Another mishap followed shortly.

“I had a good-natured officious friend, the Marchese di Grotamore, a butterfly of pleasure, to whom despotism and liberty were alike, so long as he could bask his vain little wings in the blaze of royalty. Fancying he should do me a kindness, he one day, without consulting me, inscribed my name in the visitor’s book at the royal palace, and at the same time made mention of me to one of the king’s chamberlains. In consequence of this step, I received from the

court, to my intense annoyance, an invitation to the next *festa di ballo*. Of this I took no notice, and in a few days I had a visit from Di Grotamore.

“‘My dear friend,’ he said, earnestly, ‘how are you? I was afraid you were very ill, since I did not see you at the palace last night.’

“‘I am very well indeed, thank God!’ I replied.

“‘But did you not receive an invitation?’

“‘I did.’

“‘Then why did you not present yourself? Do you not know that a royal invitation is equal to a command?’

“‘I will tell you frankly. The simple truth is, I had no wish to go.’

“‘*Santo Dio benedetto! Che cosa mai vuol dire tutta questa mistificazione? Che Diavolo! No wish to go! Are you going to turn monk or friar?*

“‘No; nothing of the sort. But if you must learn my mind, I had rather pass my days in a dungeon, than sanction, or seem to sanction, the

execrable tyranny of Ferdinand II. by my presence at his balls and banquets.' ”

“Do you think that was quite right, Signor Safi?” asked Harriet Elsmere, who had hitherto listened to him in silence. “Is it not a duty to render honour to a sovereign, because he is a sovereign, even though his character be corrupt, and his measures oppressive? And as regards Ferdinand II., had he not, in spite of his despotism, many redeeming qualities?”

“I believe he had,” replied Safi, “but I was at that time doing all in my power to undermine his authority and upset his throne. His government being a systematic negation of all law, I believed his regal claims to be void, and his rights annulled. In me, therefore, it would have been an act of hypocrisy to accept his hospitalities. If I had done so, I should have put myself in a false position; and of this I have an especial horror.”

Harriet made no answer, and Safi continued:

“Di Grotamore wrung his hands in distress

and alarm. *O Dio, Dio!* he exclaimed, *che disgrazia! che miseria!* I had not a conception, *caro*, that you were bitten by this dreadful mania. Now take my advice as a friend. Your opinions will never be divulged by me, but you will be now inevitably an object of suspicion. The very birds of the air are spies in Naples. Leave the country, therefore, at once. Delay will be dangerous. This government provides plenty of pastime for those who take things easily, and don't trouble their heads about politics; but if a man dares to sin against it, woe be to him, for he might as well fall into the embraces of a tiger!

"It would have been well, for the sake of others, if I had listened to Di Grotamore's counsel; but labour in behalf of my country was too precious to be abandoned through any vague apprehensions. *La Semenza* still appeared; but suspicion and vengeance were abroad and in my path. I will not run the risk of wearying you by telling you now what happened to me next; but if your patience should be still

unexhausted, I will, with your kind permission, do so to-morrow."

The two sisters accompanied Safi as far as the park gates, and watched him till he was out of sight.

CHAPTER XVII.

“Plead with the swift frost
That it should spare the eldest flower of spring :
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
Even now a city stands, strong, fair, and free.
Now stench and blackness yawns, like death. O, plead
With famine, or wind-walking pestilence,
Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man !
Cruel, cold, formal man ; righteous in words,
In deeds a Cain.”

The Cenci.

ON the following day Safi reappeared. An eye which he saw not, an eye which had already learned to hang with fond observance on all his movements, from an upper chamber in the chateau, saw him emerge from a dewy glade of

the forest, cross the high-road, and strike into the avenue which led directly to the park gates. He was soon reminded of his promise to continue his narrative which he thus resumed :

“ It was late on a Saturday night, and the eighteenth number of *La Semenza* was to be ready for private distribution the next morning. I was busily occupied in the laboratory, for I united in myself the several offices of editor, sub, compositor, and printer’s devil. My dearest friend was with me—Carlo Dolcini. He was the only son of a widowed mother; and never did a parent’s hopes rest on a more promising scion. His father, a distinguished advocate, had been deputy in the short-lived parliament which Ferdinand II. had been constrained to assemble in 1848, and by him Carlo had been early and carefully indoctrinated in the principles of constitutional monarchy. He was all beauty in mind and body, a model of gentleness and genius. Though very young, he was already a scholar, a poet, and a philosopher. He wrote constantly in the *Semenza*, and every one was struck by

the originality of his thoughts and diction, which were no less opposite than uncommon-place. He read everything, plagiarised nothing. Nature, society, history, and heaven, not books, filled to overflowing the fountain of his eloquence. He was truth itself. I believe he had never told a lie. He could not dissemble. We often feared he might betray us through his very candour; but no! I said, it is mean, it is short-sighted to be afraid of virtue, for it is always associated with wisdom.

“ ‘Carlino,’ I said, ‘it is late; you had better go; your fond mother will be getting anxious.’

“ ‘No,’ he replied; ‘she knows I am here; and though she fears for my safety, where none are safe, she loves to think that I am following in my father’s track.’

“ As he said this, a noise was heard in the house, heavy steps were on the stone stairs, and in a few seconds, more than one hand knocked at our laboratory door.

“ ‘Who is there?’ I asked.

“ ‘Friends.’

“ ‘Your names?’

“ ‘Friends, friends!’

“ ‘What friends? Who are you?’

“ ‘Open the door.’

“ ‘I won’t.’

“ ‘Then we shall burst it.’

“ ‘Burst it, and you die. We will slay any man who violates the rights of a private domicile.’

“ ‘We have a warrant.’

“ ‘For whom?’

“ ‘Scipio Saffi.’

“ ‘Show it me through the door ajar. If true, I yield.’

“Placing a light near enough to be able to read, and stationing Carlo with his back to the door, I held it ajar with one hand, while with the other I protected myself with a loaded pistol, lest the gendarme should prove a mere ruffian.

“Warrants are quite exceptional in the annals of the Neapolitan police. The warrant, however, in this case, was made out too clearly in my name. Resistance was in vain. I submitted. One of the gendarmes whistled, and

two more tramped up-stairs. They bound me, and were about to lay hands on Carlo.

“‘Let him go,’ I cried; ‘you have no warrant to arrest him.’

“‘We know our own business best,’ said the foremost. ‘We have orders to arrest any suspicious-looking person found in your company. And if ever there was an infernal machine manufactory, this is it. I bet anything you have made bombs and grenades enough here to blow up the King and the Royal Palace in no time.’

“So saying he took a filthy note-book from his pocket, and began making an inventory of everything in the room which appeared to him most mysterious and dangerous. At last he came to the printing apparatus and piles of the *Semenza*. This discovery filled him with malignant delight.

“‘Ah! ah!’ he exclaimed, ‘*La Semenza!* Pretty seed you will find it, young gentlemen. It will bring you a harvest of dungeon fare and long years of the galleys, at the least, if the

sovereign spares your busy little heads, and he is not very much given to pardoning or gracing the like of you.'

"After searching every hole and corner of my apartments and seizing all my letters and papers, the gendarmes conducted us to prison. The unclouded moon was shining on the placid bosom of the bay of Naples, as we passed along the esplanade, and my heart sunk within me while I thought of my beloved Carlo, and doubted whether he would ever behold the light of Heaven again. I knew that his fine frame could ill endure the hardships of a dungeon, and that his mother's heart, the widow's heart, would break if he should die. I was in hopes we should have been together in prison, but our avengers had no notion of any such mercy. We were immured each in a separate dungeon, and though near each other, I believe, communication was impossible. Though condemned to solitary confinement, we could hear through a plate of iron, pierced with holes, in our door, the steps of those who passed up and down the corridor, and the

low murmur of the chaplain's mass and the tinkling of the servitor's bell at the extremity of the dismal range. Dark, cold, and damp was my narrow and stony cell. It was not till the sun rose high that it glimmered with light, and re-revealed the many sorrowful inscriptions scratched upon the walls by its former inmates. In one corner lay a pallet of straw, and over it was a crucifix—the emblem of God's mercy, where of man's there was none. A chain, which weighed sixteen or seventeen pounds, was fastened to a strong leathern girth above my hips. It passed through a double ring fixed round my ankle, and was secured to the floor, just allowing me to limp from wall to wall. My food was scanty and disgusting. It consisted of black rye loaves, villainously baked; soup made of rancid lard and common beans, the worst of their kind; and as a Sunday dish, noxious and æid maccaroni. To complete the horrors of my den, it was filled with the most intolerable and revolting stench.

“Being a native of Piedmont, I claimed permission to write to the Sardinian Chargé d’Affaires,

and, with the help of a few ducats, induced my jailor to promise he would, if possible, bring me pen, ink, and paper early in the morning. I then lay down in my chains, not, indeed, to sleep, but to mourn over the fate of my poor Carlino. The balmy angel of the night stood aloof from my restless eyelids.

“I found in the Sardinian minister a powerful and active friend, but his mediation on behalf of Carlo was totally disregarded. I was released in a few days, my passport was given to me, and I was sentenced to perpetual exile from the kingdom of the two Sicilies. I entreated to be allowed to remain a prisoner in Carlo’s stead, but my request was scarcely thought to merit a reply.”

There was nothing in Safi’s recital which had so much excited Lizzy’s interest as the deep sympathy that he expressed for the sufferings of his friend, and the desire he had manifested to suffer in his place. Unselfishness was in her eyes the noblest and rarest virtue, and self-sacrifice the climax of heroism; and as she listened

with profound attention to his unconscious development of his own character, she heard the whisper of her heart saying—I love him.

“And you have never,” she asked, “learned what became of your friend?”

“Alas!” said Safi, “I have heard only too accurately the melancholy details. His mother obtained, with immense difficulty, an audience of the king, but the widow of a liberal member of that parliament which he had granted and soon after perfidiously suppressed, was not likely to find favour in his sight. He regarded liberals with detestation, and their kindred with suspicion. Madame Dolcini flung herself at his feet and implored him, with no feigned tears, to have compassion on her widowhood and to signalise his royal clemency by sparing the life of her only son and restoring him to her arms. She might as well have besought the howling storm to spare the vessel which it has impinged on the breakers. The obdurate sovereign replied that he would confer with one of his ministers on the subject, but that he could not make any promises as to

the result; that it was often necessary to make examples; that rebellion was worse than witchcraft, and the most heinous of crimes; that the press not subjected to government censure was the fountain of all evil; that pretended patriots were the curse of his reign; that misplaced clemency was, in fact, cruelty; that his government had but one fault, viz., that it was too paternal; and the like. Ah, lonely widow! broken hearted widow! thou hadst been happier, perhaps, if God had given thee a less gifted, less noble-minded son.

“After a long delay, Carlo’s trial came on; if trial it can be called, in a country where the judges are expected to convict those whom the government impeaches. Carlo was condemned to death for writing, printing, and publishing ‘seditious, profane, blasphemous, treasonable, democratical, and revolutionary principles,’ and was remanded to prison, to await the day of his execution. Every art had been employed to induce him to confess the names of his associates in the *Semenza*, and to

divulge those of the subscribers. Threats and promises to this end had hitherto been unavailing, but his wretched persecutors were so base and venal themselves that they were unable to conceive the possibility of his not yielding at last. After his condemnation they held out to him hopes of obtaining a remission of the sentence, provided he would betray his accomplices. As he still refused, they proceeded to torture. Various instruments were tried, but, though his bodily powers were evidently sinking, his will seemed to gather strength from the savage ordeal.

“His mother was not the only woman who loved him with her whole heart. Clementina Tivoli lived near them, and in childhood they had been friends. They had plighted their troth, and their love was as pure as it was immutable. She had a noble soul, devoted, and courageous; in one word, she was worthy of him she admired, respected, and loved. She resolved to make a desperate effort to save him. Her plan was this. She was to drive to the prison attended by

her maid, each of them having on one or two spare garments, and being provided with gold pieces to slip at any moment into the hands of the jailors. She was to seek an interview with the governor, and obtain from him permission to take a last leave of Carlo before his execution, to dress him with all possible care in the clothes which they had provided, send him off with her maid, and remain in the dungeon herself in his stead, while he should take refuge on board an English man-of-war. The scheme was the more feasible because Carlo's fair complexion and extreme youth might accord well enough with a feminine disguise; yet it failed,—failed by reason of Clementina's virtue, which would not fail.

“The governor refused, raised every sort of obstacle and objection, protracted the conversation, praised her pluck, flattered her beauty, and ended by telling her in a whisper that there was only one price at which he could possibly be induced to grant her request. Clementina blushed, and rose to leave.

“‘My life,’ she said, ‘cruel tempter! I would give for him willingly; my honour, never.’

“Meanwhile, poor Carlo’s end drew nigh. His inhuman torturers now began to draw his toenails one by one with pincers, to force him to avow the names of his colleagues. The agony, fainting, exhaustion, and inflammation which followed this barbarity, superinduced on his previous weakness a fever, which in a few days proved fatal.

“Alone he had endured his tortures; alone he struggled with strong death. No loving eyes watched the feeble flickering flame of life; no tender hand supported his drooping head; no kind voice breathed encouragement or inspired hope; no labouring bosom responded to his last sigh. In the dark, and in the dead of night, he died; and they who slew him found his corpse cold as the cold straw-strewn dungeon pavement which was his bed and his bier.

“He died; and he was buried. Two mourners only, his mother and Clementina, followed him

to his last home. They only—for who beside in that City of Suspicion would have ventured to honour the obsequies of a political prisoner condemned to death? They followed him to the quiet, passionless cemetery; and their warm tears rained fast upon his fresh grave.

“It was not long before his widowed, and now childless mother was laid by his side. In losing him, the last links which bound her to this world had been broken, and she now desired nothing so much as to rejoin her son and husband in that world of justice and righteousness, whither, she was fully persuaded, they had gone before.

“Clementina lived on. Twice in every week she drives or walks with her maid to the cemetery without the city walls, and stands beside the small black wooden cross of her lover’s grave, and lays fresh flowers or wreaths of *Immortelle* on the grassy barrow, or implants it anew with biennial roses of Pestum. God bless her gentle footsteps, for they tread on hallowed and holy dust.”

Safi ceased. His story was simple; but simple tales are often the most affecting, and his had thrilled many a sensitive chord in Harriet Elsmere's heart. He had told of sorrow, of suffering, of bereavement, of strong and faithful love, of death, and of the world beyond the grave; and these were themes which excited in her profound emotions, and unsealed the fountain of her tears. She rose hastily, and closing the door behind her, with a sob only half-suppressed, left Lizzy and Scipio Safi in the drawing-room—alone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A woman of accomplishments may entertain those who have the pleasure of knowing her for half an hour with great brilliancy ; but a mind full of ideas, and with that elastic spring which the love of knowledge only can convey, is a perpetual source of exhilaration and amusement to all that come within its reach ; not collecting its force into single and insulated achievements, like the efforts made in the fine arts—but diffusing, equally over the whole of existence, a calm pleasure—better loved as it is longer felt—and suitable to every variety and every period of life.—*Wit and Wisdom of the Rev. Sydney Smith.*

SAFI perceived the effect which his tale had produced on Harriet Elsmere's sensibilities, but he felt it was more becoming to make no observation upon it, and to appear not to notice it. The sight was not altogether ungrateful to him, for

he loved tenderness of feeling in a woman, no less than valour and daring in a man. If the one sister, he thought, possesses such softness of character and tearfulness of sentiment, it is probable that the other also is richly endowed with those qualities which render a female most feminine and most angelic.

They were left alone, and for the first time an indescribable sense of pleasure crept over Safi and Lizzy also. It was a mesmeric-like state of nerves and spirit, a new phase of existence, a charm, a spell, which neither of them was in haste to dissolve; and Harriet, with the tact of a married sister, prolonged her absence from the drawing-room much more than was necessary.

A few moments' pause had succeeded Harriet's exit. There is always a certain awkwardness in a position which has become intensely real; and such at all times is that of two young persons like Safi and Lizzy, of lively imaginations, who take increasing interest in each other, and are suddenly and unexpectedly thrown together without the restraint of a third presence.

Safi was the first to break silence.

"And now," he said, "Miss Monteagles, that I have, with perhaps too much prolixity, recounted to you some of the events of my youth, will you allow me to ask what circumstances have led you to take so keen an interest, as I am delighted to perceive you do take, in the history, hopes, and destinies of my country?"

"A woman's life," said Lizzy, "is like that of a mule in a mill. We go round and round in a little sphere, dull and monotonous, round and round, and our very progress is retrograde! If I were to recount any part of my history to you, after the romantic variety of your life,—why it would be like munching bread and butter after feasting upon nectar and ambrosia!"

"But I am very fond of bread and butter," replied Safi; "in fact, in my present mortal condition, that sort of diet suits me much better than the cates of the gods."

"Four years ago, then," began Lizzy, "I was staying at Brighton with an old maiden aunt of mine. She was very kind at bottom, and very

cantankerous on the surface; very godly in her heart, and very demoniacal in her temper. Among ourselves, we always called her, instead of Aunt Tabitha, Aunt Nature-and-Grace. One day we were walking together towards the sea, and descending a rather narrow and steep street. A carriage and pair came behind us at a rapid pace. Owing to the slope, the horses felt the pressure of the carriage, and were fretted. There was very little room for it to pass. We were in the middle of the road. Close by us was an Italian playing his organ. We moved briskly to the pavement on one side, and he endeavoured to do the like on the other; but a leathern strap and pole, which he carried to support his organ, embarrassed his legs, and threw him down. The carriage passed over his neck, and he died on the spot.

“ A little curly-headed, bright-eyed boy, between six and seven years old, was holding the hem of the Italian’s jacket when he fell. On seeing his father lying bleeding and dead, he set up a piercing shriek, and clasped his tiny

hands, and bent himself double. Then, fearing to touch his parent's distorted and ensanguined corpse, the distracted little orphan threw himself, in a paroxysm of uncontrollable grief, on the organ, and hid his face in his hands.

"An irresistible impulse made me spring across the road, and take him by the arm. 'Where do you live, my poor child?' I asked; but he made no answer, and went on with his lamentations. I had learned just as much Italian as English girls do learn, which is next to nothing. However, I just remembered that *casa* means a house, and I stammered out, '*La vostra casa?*'

"He raised his head instantly. His sobs and tears ceased; and he answered, '*Non lo so.*'

"We continued:

" '*La vostra madre?*'

" '*La Mamma è morta.*'

" '*Avete frati?*'

"I meant '*fratelli*,' but he understood me, and shaking his head, saying, '*nessun fratello.*'

" '*Avete sorelle?*'

“ ‘*Nessuna sorella.*’

“ ‘*Il vostro nome?*’

“ ‘*Gaddo.*’

“ ‘*E l'altro nome?*’ (I meant ‘*nome di famiglia.*’)

“ ‘*Non lo so.*’

“ ‘*Venite con me à casa mia, Gaddo,*’ I said, at the same time vowing in my heart two things, from that very day to study Italian in downright earnest, and to take care of Gaddo till he should be old enough to be apprenticed to a suitable trade.”

Blessed be the day that first we met! thought Safi; for in my eyes thou art the loveliest creature that God ever created. . Thus Safi thought, but he did not speak, for Lizzy’s voice was too sweet to be interrupted.

She continued, therefore:—“As we moved away, Gaddo often stopped to look back on the crowd that was gathering round his lifeless father, and, sobbing anew, exclaimed bitterly: *Il Babbo è morto. Il Babbo è morto.*

“All the way home, I had to coax my aunt

into letting Gaddo stay with the servants till the next day, when we might see what could be done with him. Her conscience would not let her refuse; but she murmured and muttered a swarm of stinging objections, which resolved themselves principally under two heads,—that if once he came, we should never be able to get rid of him, and that he would fill the house with vermin. How inconsistent human nature is! How seldom one finds simplicity of character, except in a simpleton. How many persons have a mind like a chess-board, on which the powers of good and evil are long engaged, with apparently equal chances of success.

“Gaddo was soon, and for the first time in his life, made acquainted with a bath, and taught by experience the valuable properties of soap. His clothes were purified or flung away, and such new attire was provided as made him forthwith quite presentable, at least in kitchen society.

“Meanwhile, I had laid siege to the Italian language with as much ardour as if it could be taken by storm. As I knew that aunt Nature-

and-Grace would fret and fume if I neglected her by day, I sat up half the night over the fun of Goldoni, and the melodious canzonets of Metastasio. Those were days, or rather nights, of grammar and dictionary; yet the haze of my ignorance could only in part conceal the beauties and charms of my authors. I felt that there was something before me which was worth toiling for, something very unlike, and far above the cold, formal, classical jingle-tingle of French tragedy, and French versification, of which I was sick. In the day-time I chatted with Gaddo, and in teaching him English taught myself no little debased Tuscan.

"A week passed by. Gaddo's father had been buried, and Gaddo was still under my aunt's roof. But why should I lengthen my long rigmarole. I am sure you are tired of the poor little fellow's name. Men don't care about the littlenesses of a woman's life. And why should they? They move in wider and higher spheres."

"No, no!" said Safi, "I cannot let you off

so easily—I am most anxious to hear what became of Gaddo under your benevolent auspices. Orphans are venerable because of their bereavement; besides, he is my compatriot.”

“I began, then,” continued Lizzy, “to think of sending Gaddo to school; but on this subject I was sadly afraid of a collision with my aunt. ‘I should like, dear aunt Tabitha,’ I said, ‘to provide something of an education for this poor orphan.’

“‘Yes, my dear,’ she replied; ‘and what school have you thought of?’

“‘Well, dear aunt, you know, of course, that Gaddo was christened in the Roman Catholic Church; and he tells me that his parents took him to church every Sunday, and that his mother, who died of a fever three months ago, taught him to say, morning and evening, ‘Our Father,’ and some other prayer. I was going to say, ‘the Hail Mary,’ but I checked myself, lest I should rouse my aunt’s displeasure. She can’t bear the Virgin Mary, and always calls her Diana of the Ephesians. ‘Now it seems to me,’

I added, 'that the best thing I can do, under these circumstances, will be to send him to a school here, which is conducted by some sisters of charity, and superintended by two or three priests, one of whom is an Italian, and will, no doubt, be very kind to him. By this means he will be brought up in the faith of his father and mother; and respect and love of departed parents is in itself no unimportant part of an orphan's education.'

"My words, which to you seem innocent, were to my aunt like a sudden clap of thunder on a still summer's eve. Her brow became a bank of dark clouds, and her old eyes flashed young and fierce lightning.

"'What!' she exclaimed, 'you would make a Papist of him? You, Lizzy, a Protestant, and the grand-daughter of a Protestant Bishop? Send him to a Popish school! Consign him to the care of a dark, subtle, crafty, Italian, Guy Fawkes-priest! Verily you have not frequented those abominable Puseyite churches for

nothing. All this comes of those young Oxford clergymen, whom you are always running after. I am certain they are Jesuits in disguise. They want to sap and overthrow every bulwark which the Church of England has raised against Popery, so that the enemy may come in like a flood. But it won't succeed, Lizzy: it won't succeed. And as to the little orphan, I will not have him sent to a Popish seminary, so long as he sleeps under my roof. That is positive. I won't allow the contagion of Popery to be brought into my house. There is no knowing where it would end.'

"I was well aware that all reasoning with my aunt on this subject would be worse than idle; but her displeasure did not shake my resolution; I was firm as a cliff.

" 'Well, dear aunt,' I said, 'it will never do to allow Gaddo to get into harm's way by keeping him from school; but I really cannot consent to mix up any proseletysing with the matter. If you will not permit me to do as I think right

with him here, I must return to Hastings, to my Aunt Dorothy, who, as you know, will always let me judge for myself and act as I please.'

"Aunt Nature-and-Grace was staggered by my obstinacy. Notwithstanding her menaces, she had not the least idea of my leaving her so soon. Her tone lowered, and she asked:

" 'And who is to defray all the expenses of your little foundling, Lizzy?'

" 'Myself, dear Aunt.'

" 'Yourself, Lizzy! Why you have nothing of your own at present, nor will have till you are of age.'

" 'I have my allowance, dear Aunt Tabitha, for pocket money and dress.'

" 'And if you spend it all on Gaddo, you must appear like a kitchen maid.'

"I soon satisfied my Aunt that I had not undertaken more than I was able to effect. Gaddo was schooled according to my plan; and before I left Hastings to live with my sister, he was duly apprenticed to a shoemaker; and he now bids fair to become an honest and industrious tradesman.

"You have heard my poor tale. Its sublime climax is a cobbler's last!"

"To me," said Safi, "the merit of a story lies in its moral rather than in its romance. I pity the man who could not see both climax and sublimity in your cobbler's last. I admire the firmness you displayed, and rejoice in the happy results of your benevolence. You acted in the spirit of the great Vincent de Paul, the father of foundlings, and your charity could not fail of its reward. But I have yet one more request to make, and that is that you will tell me something more about your first impressions of Italian literature. You did not stop at Metastasio and Goldoni, I am sure."

"No," replied Lizzy. "Once fairly started, I was eager in the chase. During four years I read every Italian author I could borrow or buy. The more I read of them and about them, the more they seemed to me to rise in greatness above their fellows in other lands. In spite of the prodigious disadvantages under which she has laboured, Italy appears to have been specially

gifted by Heaven with the power of taking the initiative in science, literature and art."

Here Lizzy stopped short. The instincts of humility measured her sentences. She was afraid she was talking too pompously for her sex and her age, and that she might appear guilty of self-display and of endeavouring to get credit for more knowledge than she really possessed.

Whatever she did, or did not do, was pleasing in the sight of Safi, and added fuel to his heart's flame. Whatever she said seemed to point her out more distinctly as the being who centred in herself all that would make him happy, if he could link his fate with hers.

"Your remark," he said, "is most true; and such truth is more welcome from the lips of a foreigner than they would be from those of a compatriot. Almost all great discoveries recorded in modern history, may be traced to Italians. The genius of Italy is well represented by Galileo among the planets, and Columbus among the islands of the new world. Think you that this is saying too much?"

"As far as I know," replied Lizzy, "certainly not. Galileo not only developed the rotatory movement of the Earth round the Sun, he also took a crowd of observations, which changed the face of astronomy, and was, by minor discoveries and his invention of the pendulum, thermometer, telescope, and other instruments, the very creator of experimental philosophy. And what Galileo was in the heavens, and Columbus and America Vespucci on the earth, such were Dante and Tasso in the realm of poetry, and Cimabue, Leonardo da Vinci, Perugino, Raphael and Michael Angelo in the schools of art. I had been told Dante was barbaresque; but when I came to read and understand him, how was I surprised and charmed to find that he combined the utmost sublimity of conception with the widest range of knowledge, the most felicitous dictation, and the greatest refinement, delicacy, subtlety, sweetness and tenderness of thought, and aptitude of overflowing metaphor. He also was a bold innovator. He was to modern poets what Homer, as I imagine, was to ancient, their father and their model. As

no work of great importance had, before his time, been composed in the Italian language, he, in the thirteenth century, may be considered as having stereotyped that most beautiful, rich and musical dialect. It is said of Alfieri that, having begun by making extracts of the most striking passages in the *Divina Commedia*, he went on till, by one selection after another, he had copied the entire poem. This I can fully understand. Every triplet has some peculiar beauty. I have repeated his episodes of Francesca di Rimini, and of Count Ugolino and his sons in the Tower of Famine, and his descriptions of Beatrice as the personification of celestial wisdom, until they are quite engraven on my memory."

"What Beatrice was to Dante, that," thought Safi, "thou art to me, thou lovely maiden."

"Il cui parlar m' innondà,
E scalda sì, che più e più m' avviva."*

He could contain himself no longer. He was overpoweringly persuaded that Lizzy was meet

* Il Paradiso. Canto iv.

to become the wife of his bosom and the mother of his race. Her enthusiasm about Dante put all further deliberation out of the question. He rose, and standing beside her, he said, in a calm but earnest tone:

“Miss Monteagles, I am unfriendly to long courtships and long engagements. Pardon me, therefore, if I am too abrupt when I ask you simply and without further preface—Will you be mine, mine soon, and mine for ever?”

“What do you mean?” said Lizzy, with a look of surprise and alarm. “You have known me so short a time.”

“The time,” replied Safi, “has been short, it is true; but it has been quite long enough for me. In you I find those qualities and endowments which I most admire, and which, when united, form what has long been my *beau ideal* of a wife. My choice and decision are made irrevocably. I beseech you to make every inquiry about me, and if you find that falsehood has never passed my lips, that my honour has never been sullied, nor my reputation blemished,

then, I ask again, will you consent to be mine and mine for ever; my companion, my friend, my angel and my wife, my joy, my strength, my consolation, my sweetness, my love, my music, my worship, and my theme?"

Lizzy drooped her head, like a flower overcharged with dew, but she answered not.

"Your silence gives consent?" said Safi, seating himself at her side.

Then Lizzy replied very slowly and pensively: "I cannot say no to your request, but I will never leave my sister until—she is more settled. Do not be too hasty, and all may come right."

Safi passed his arm round her neck, and before she had ended her sentence, he had pressed to his bosom the dearest object which earth contained.

"How long do you think it will be, sweetest Lizzy," asked Safi, "before your sister will be more settled?"

"I really do not know."

"Is there no chance of her husband coming to St. Amand for good?"

"Perhaps he may. I cannot say with any certainty."

"How long have they been married?"

"Five years."

"In what part of England did they reside?"

"At Flosdale, in the county of Durham?"

"And did you live with them?"

"For some time I did."

"What occupation has Mr. Elsmere now in Paris?"

"I do not know that he has any at the present moment."

"Then why does he not—?"

Here Harriet Elsmere re-entered the room, and Safi the accepted, or, at least, not rejected lover, soon after took his leave.

CHAPTER XIX.

It is the preference of duty to inclination in the ordinary course of life, it is the practice of self-denial in a thousand little instances which forms the truest test of character and secures the reward of those who live not to themselves.—*Rev. Robert Hall. Sermons.*

THE sun was shining with unusual splendour while Scipio Saffi pursued through the forest his path of return. The radiance which burnished all around him corresponded to the glow of thought within, and if it had then been spring instead of autumn, the analogy between what he saw and what he felt would have been complete. How much, he said within himself, of a man's

destiny depends on a few critical moments. One half hour's anger in the duel frustrated the fond purpose of my life; one half hour's courtship has, if Heaven so will, enriched me with the treasure of earthly treasures, a worthy wife. Then his memory feasted on the charms and virtues, the beauty and accomplishments of his affianced bride. O model of a woman; O maiden without compare! O star serene; O fragrant flower! O mine of knowledge; O fount of sweetness; O dell of delight! Then vision after vision of terrestrial beatitude and mutual multiplications of enjoyment rose in rapid succession upon his mental view. O happy St. Amand, he said, O happy Safi; O happy earth!

Then—such are the vicissitudes of human thought and feeling—a sombre cloud came across his inward horizon, and he soliloquized thus:

“Why did she look so pensive and downcast when I put the vital question?

“All maidens look so, when you first talk to them seriously about your love. They know

well how practical and momentous the subject is.

“Why did she add ‘but’? Confound the buts! ‘*But* I will never leave my sister until’— Then she hesitated. And why did she hesitate? Then, after a pause, she added ‘until she is more settled.’ What could she mean by ‘more settled’? There can be no discord between Mrs. Elsmere and her husband, for he comes down from Paris to stay with her, and she is at St. Amand, as I am told, merely for her health. How strange that my Lizzy did not know whether Elsmere has any occupation in Paris, nay, seems rather to think that he has none. Then why does he live there away from his wife? I wish she had not come into the room at that instant, and broken off my inquiry in the midst. But that which puzzles and perhaps disconcerts me is, Lizzy’s having said, ‘Do not be too hasty, and all may come right.’ Have I, then, been too precipitate in plunging and diving at once for that goodly and precious

pearl, which I saw glittering at the bottom of a bright sea of chances?

“ ‘All may come right,’ she said. Then there is something which at present is *not* right. That is a clear inference. And if it *may* come right, it also *may not*. O gloomy thought! O harassing incertitude! ”

Thus the walk, begun in rapture, closed in doubt and distress. Thus soon did Scipio Safi realize the truth of what poets—the best of practical philosophers—have always said, that

“The course of true love never did run smooth.”

and

“ Oh Love! what is it in this world of ours,
Which makes it fatal to be loved? Ah, why
With cypress branches hast thou wreathed thy bowers,
And made thy best interpreter a sigh? ”

And Lizzy, gentle Lizzy, was her heart light, was her countenance radiant with unclouded smiles, when Safi had left her alone with Harriet? Far otherwise. The proposal which he had made to her, and which she cordially wished to accept, brought home to her mind

more closely the degrading and anomalous position in which her sister and her brother-in-law then stood.

Harriet's experienced eye saw at a glance by Lizzy's countenance what had occurred during her brief absence.

"Well, dear Lizzie," she said, "he has told his love, I am sure he has. And have you accepted him? He is a noble-minded fellow, and worthy of you, I believe."

"I told him," Lizzy replied, "that nothing would induce me to leave you until you are more settled."

"Now, my darling Lizzy, why did you say that? You will make me miserable. Why should my misfortunes and faults be barriers to your happiness?"

"I do not wish," replied Lizzy, "for any happiness apart from duty."

"I trust," said Harriet, "that after Roland's next visit to St. Amand, he will quite make up his mind to live with me entirely, and then you will be free."

Lizzy persisted—"I shall never, never, leave you, so long as Roland wishes me to stay with you, either for your sake, or for that of the dear children."

"That would be carrying self-sacrifice much too far," said Harriet.

"There are so many," observed Lizzy, "who do not carry it far enough, that little harm will be done if one or two should carry it too far."

"Alas! dearest Lizzy," said her sister, "your goodness and tenderness make me feel more bitterly than ever the magnitude of my offence. To have embittered my own life would have been a small thing, a natural consequence, and a just penalty; but my 'sorrow's crown of sorrow' is that I have brought trouble and anguish on the innocent, the kind, and the good."

"Do not, dearest Harriet," rejoined Lizzy, "allow yourself to be 'swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.' In the present and the future lie the remedies of the past. A few more

strokes through a rough sea, and we shall reach a shore, I believe."

"God grant it!" sighed Harriet. "I am looking very anxiously for Roland's next arrival. Ever since that dreadful night when the highwayman fired at him, he has been sadly downcast. Fits of the gloomiest despondency came over him frequently while we were alone, and nothing would cheer him. 'The wheel,' he said, 'of fortune, or of Providence, if you will, has taken a downward turn with me, and will never, I fear, rise again.'"

"If we can once fairly get him amongst us, dearest Harriet," said Lizzy, "I have not the least doubt that we should be able to restore his jaded spirits. He wants now that without which men are but poor things—the genial atmosphere of woman's love."

"And the sweet prattle of his children," Harriet added. "And then again, I am sure he will like Safi, when he knows him, and will enjoy his conversation. But oh, my sister! what will Safi think of me when he learns, as

he must learn, all? I loathe myself. Will he not loathe me too? Nay, it tortures me to reflect that my sin may be visited upon you, and that he may become averse to that very marriage which he now so ardently seeks."

"Then he is not that generous and noble-minded being I take him for," said Lizzy. "On the contrary, if Roland, from a strong sense of duty, renounces his false wife and returns to his true, I believe that Scipio will become more attached to us in consequence of those very circumstance which would estrange lower and lesser minds; he will, unless I am greatly deceived, cling the more faithfully to you, because nothing is more venerable than a sincere repentance, to Roland because he will have displayed moral courage in confronting the world and the world's worldly law, and to me, because I am embarked in the same stormy boat with yourselves."

"If it is so with Safi," said Harriet, "he must be very unlike other men. Christian forgiveness is generally nothing more than a compromise between the forgiveness enjoined by the

Gospel and the revenge applauded by heathenism. It just amounts to this : I quite forgive him; but I shall never speak to him again as long as I live. Then as to loving people, or being kind and attentive to them, because the world frowns upon them, because they are afflicted, friendless, strangers, sick, and poor—who does it? The smiles and favours which Christians in general bestow on such as these are exactly in an inverse ratio to that which is prescribed in the sublime morals of the Gospel. Christian—*soi-disant* Christian—friendship, is but too commonly,

“A shade that follows wealth and fame,
But leaves the wretch to weep.”

And in this respect, I cannot say that, so far as I have observed, I perceive much difference between High Church and Low Church, Protestants or Catholics. If Thou shouldest be extreme to judge us according to the New Testament, O Lord! who might abide?—Did you hear a noise at the door, Lizzy, as if some one were standing outside?”

"Yes," said Lizzy, "I suppose it is the Baron's old black dog, Ramono. He lies there on the mat, thinking his master is here as usual."

"Just look, dear Lizzy."

Lizzy stole softly to the door, and opened it without noise. There was nobody standing there; but she just glimpsed a form, as of an elderly woman, wearing a thick veil, at the foot of a short flight of stairs, which led to the servants' hall, and by a back-door communicated with the garden.

"We really must be careful, dearest Harriet," said Lizzy. "That poor creature evidently is, as they told us, very inquisitive; and she understands English."

"True," replied Harriet; "but we have little to apprehend from her tongue, since she preserves a silence more rigorous than that of a Trappist. What a life!"

Two days after this conversation, Harriet despatched a messenger to Signor Safi with a note, inviting him to meet her husband and Monsieur

and Madame de Barrère at dinner the same evening. The invitation was trebly welcome, because it was enclosed to Safi with a few pleasant words from Lizzy herself. It was the first time he had seen her handwriting; and he pressed it to his lips with all the ardour of youthful and Italian love.

CHAPTER XX.

Difficilis, querulus, laudator temperis acti.

Hard to please, querulous, encomiast of times gone by.

Horace. De Arte Poeticâ.

THE growing popularity of Saffi in the lower apartments of the chateau had for some days filled the Baron de Barrère with utter consternation. Though he could not help admitting that he liked Saffi personally, he held his political principles in the utmost abhorrence. Modern society, he believed, was completely out of joint, and liberals were those who had dislocated it. It was in vain to point out to him the distinction between democrats and the partisans of

constitutional monarchy; the latter, he affirmed, were the most plausible and the most dangerous demagogues of all; for they made republics and called them kingdoms, they made presidents, and called them kings. It is no wonder, he thought, that Safi should take with these English, for they are of all people the most revolutionary, and they foment revolution to the utmost all over the world: nevertheless, I will not suffer him to walk over the course without a competitor; as surely as I dine with him to-day, I will run a lance at him full tilt, even though I should fight single-handed."

Happily the French were in a minority in the party; otherwise it might have been difficult to strike out any rational conversation. The talk at a French dinner-table seldom rises higher than the last polka or the first woodcock. The more rapid the topic, the more eagerly are opinions pronounced, the louder rings and roars.

"The clash of arguments, and jar of words."

When the Baron de Barrère, however, was free

to follow his own bent, his conversation was by no means "*Vox et præterea nihil.*" He knew very well that

"Talking is not always to converse."

He owed something, perhaps, on this behalf, to his long residence among the English; for they are a much more reading people than the French; and reading is the substratum of rational discourse. His thoughts were cast, it is true, in a very antiquated mould; yet no one could say that he was either unreflective or ill-informed.

Being seated next to Lizzy, it may well be supposed that Safi was not particularly anxious to engage in a discussion with the grey-haired representative of the politics of a by-gone age. "An ounce of wit," Sydney Smith said, "is worth more than a pound of clergy;" and Safi would have added, "a grain of Lizzy is worth a hundred weight of De Barrère." Her smiles to him were summer; her words were sweeter than honey, and the light that surrounded her

threw everything and everybody else into the shade.

The Baron had long been watching for a favourable opportunity of making a friendly assault on the young patriot, but none presented itself. He was beginning to despair of finding one, when the last dish of game was being removed, and the conversation suddenly took a newspaper turn, and rolled, of course, on the wrongs of peoples and the rights of princes.

"Will you have the kindness to tell me, Safi," he said, "how many kings you have had the satisfaction of seeing topple off their thrones in your time?"

"Not so many," replied Safi, "but that I hope to see one more."

"His sacred Majesty, the King of Naples, I suppose. Alas! that a sovereign so young and so inexperienced, yet so beloved, and I may say, adored by his subjects, the son of so great a father and so saintly a mother, should have such malignant and implacable foes! Well; and

when you are rid of him, when you have driven into exile the last of the mighty and illustrious Bourbons, on whom will the impious thunderbolts of revolution fall next? On the best of men, the most paternal of rulers, the most venerable of patriarchs, Pius IX? Yes, confess it, Safi; you, though a Catholic, are, at this moment, with malicious and parricidal ingenuity, planning, plotting, and conniving at the pope's utter ruin."

"I certainly shall not plead guilty to that charge," replied Safi. "I believe the temporal states of the church to be a very seemly and desirable appendage to the pope's spiritual supremacy; and I am convinced that if they should be withdrawn, the independence of the holy father would frequently be compromised: nevertheless, I would rather see them pass into other hands, than that they should be governed in a manner which is offensive to the great majority of the people, and preserved in peace only by the presence of permanent foreign armies of occupation.

Yes, rather than have this perpetuated year after year, I would say with the Pasquinade—

Il gran Prete
Torni alla rete.

Let the high priest become as innocent of domains and provinces as his predecessor, the Fisherman, and as sceptreless as St. Leo and Gregory the Great. The patrimony of the church, though an ecclesiastical property, is not exempted from liability to that *jus publicum* which affects all other dominions."

"And can you," asked the Baron, in an indignant tone, "can you without compunction thus coldly resign the heir-loom of eleven centuries, the best and purest government on the face of the earth, from which all anti-christian laws are for ever excluded? Can you thus tamely think of betraying the sacred trust, and of giving it into the hands of a parliament composed chiefly of infidels, who, in the very first session, would be almost sure to make some enactments fundamentally opposed to christianity."

"Nations cannot," observed Safi, "in our day legislate always on strictly Catholic principles without injustice to those of their subjects who profess another faith or no faith at all. To do so would be oppressive and persecutive."

"And you would fain ruin," said the Baron, "ruin and annihilate the only temporal government which is *not* founded on human expediency, the only one which is immutably regulated by fixed and divine principles, and, in its stead, you would install a convention to whose godless measures it might be difficult to set any bounds."

"What acts subversive of religion," asked Roland, "would an Italian parliament be likely to pass?"

"Many," replied the Baron. "It might, for example, tamper seriously with the laws of marriage, which, as you know, are, among Catholics, very strict and clearly defined. It might even attempt to legalise bigamy, by permitting a man to divorce one wife, and then straightway espouse another. This is precisely what you have done in England; but such a law as yours

on this subject would have been utterly impossible in the papal states."

"What a happy country to live in!" exclaimed Harriet involuntarily.

Everyone's eyes turned towards her. Her observation seemed uncalled for; but none present, except Roland and Lizzy, had any idea of the feelings which had prompted it.

"Happy, I mean," she added, "in this particular, that double marriages would not be permitted there. It is quite shocking to think how many divorce cases come before the public now in England. The papers are full of them; and the judges of the divorce court are overwhelmed with the amount of labour before them."

"I heard of a singular case," said Roland, "which occurred lately, and upon which I should like to hear the opinion of the present company. A young man, who had been devotedly attached to his wife, was induced by vindictive feelings to sue for a divorce on the ground of infidelity, and, having obtained it, to marry again. Scarcely

were his second nuptials celebrated, when he received by letter and by inquiry abundant proof of his first wife, whom at heart he loved as before, having broken with her seducer and reformed her life in a spirit of the sincerest penitence. She desired, of course, to return to her husband. He wished it no less than herself. But he was bound by a new tie. He felt that he had done wrong in contracting it. He doubted its validity. But the law of England was against him. What do you think, Madame de Barrère, that he ought to have done, in such a case?"

"Indeed," replied the Baronne, "the case is so very singular, that, if I had not heard of it on such good authority as yours, I should scarcely believe it. In this country, the lady, I suppose, would most probably have retired into a convent and you would hear nothing more about the matter. What do you say, Louis?"

"Well," said the Baron, "I'm sure I hardly know. If the man in question was, as I presume, a Protestant, he violated no law of his own religion by marrying the second wife. If he had

been a Catholic the divorce could never have been obtained from the ecclesiastical courts; the second marriage would have been null, and, as to taking back his repentant spouse, he would have been right in doing so, no doubt, but, of course, a confirmed idiot."

"Pardon me, Monsieur de Barrère," said Safi, "but I do not think your opinion exactly meets the case. The fact of the husband being a Protestant does not appear to me to alter the matter essentially. There are certain principles of right and truth which transcend all sectarian consideration. If he who had married again when divorced from his wife, became sincerely convinced that he had done wrong, that he had infringed the Divine laws of matrimony, that his conjugal relations to his first wife were not really dissolved, that her claims upon him, though they had been suspended for a time by her misconduct, were now, by her repentance, and reformation, revived and restored,—if such a man resolved boldly to face the sneering world, to avow that he had erred, and to return to his first love,—why, instead of

an idiot, I say he would be a hero of moral courage. There are many who will never acknowledge that they have been in fault, never ask pardon of a fellow-creature; they think they would demean themselves by such an act: these have no moral greatness. I do not deny that a man would be a hopeless imbecile who could lightly receive back a truant wife, but if deeply contrite and thoroughly reformed, why should the fallen wife, and the wife only, be for ever excluded from human forgiveness?"

Harriet and Lizzy remained silent; but they were delighted beyond measure at the judgment which Safi had delivered. It was precisely what they would have wished him to say and to think.

The conversation soon returned into the channel from which it had for a moment been diverted by Harriet's abrupt exclamation.

"Now what do you, Safi," said the Baron, "regard as the true source of authority in the state?"

"The people," replied the patriot. "I con-

sider the choice or assent of the majority of the people to be absolutely indispensable to the validity of a government. Kings concede privileges, people confer crowns. You, I suppose, hold that legitimate descent and hereditary title are the sufficient and only source of regal power, that kings have a divine right to rule wrong, and that the people have no right except to be trampled upon!"

"No, Safi, no," rejoined the Baron. "You are mistaken. I trace the source of kingly authority to a fountain-head still higher and more august than that of legitimate succession,—even to the sovereign pontiff himself!—Ah, I see you look amazed at my avowal, and our English friends begin to smile."

"I am perfectly astounded," said Safi. "I scarcely thought a man could be found, in our day, who should maintain the temporal supremacy of the pope."

"Ah! I dare say. You are one of those, Safi, who believe in steam and progress, and the nineteenth century, and all that kind of thing. I

don't! I venerate antiquity and the ages of faith. I firmly believe that the pope, as the vicar of Jesus Christ, has all power given to him on earth, and that he is the fountain not only of all sacerdotal authority, which you allow, but also of regal, which you deny. Thus he is supreme both in temporal and spiritual things. I would that I had lived in those good old times when kings did him homage for their crowns, and required anointing by him, or one deputed by him, in confirmation of their title to the throne!"

"I suppose then," said Safi, "you think that human nature reached its apogee in the person of Hildebrand!"

"Well, the great Hildebrand does, perhaps, represent as well as any my idea of the pope,

*'Quod regum tumidas contuderit minas,'**

because he beat down the haughty menaces and impious resistance of kings, and exalted far above

* Hor. Carm. Lib. iv., Od. iii.

them the Imperial power of the church. Do you remember how he wrote to Solomon, the King of Hungary, saying: 'You ought to know that the kingdom of Hungary belongs to the Roman church, and learn that you will incur the indignation of the holy see, if you do not acknowledge that you hold your dominions of the pope, and not of the Emperor.'"*

"It is no wonder," remarked Safi, "that Hildebrand provoked the vengeance of Imperial Majesty and died in exile. Such extravagant pretensions as his, and those of some other popes in the middle ages, are not common either to his earlier predecessors or his latest successors. St. Peter did not inform the Roman Emperors that he was their master, nor did Pius VII. admonish Napoleon that Spain, Naples, and Westphalia belonged to the holy see."

"Mere *badinage*, my dear Safi! Say what you please, I should have rejoiced to see the great and mighty Henry IV. of Germany waiting three long days, bare-footed and fasting, and clothed in

* Russell's Modern Europe, vol. i.

sackcloth, in the month of January, outside the gates of the castle of Canossa in the snowy Apennines, until the offended pontiff, the sainted Hildebrand, should graciously admit him to pardon and reconciliation. Yes, and it would have done my heart good to have seen this excommunicated Barbarossa humbling himself to kiss the feet of Alexander III., and meekly holding the stirrup of the mule on which that old man, then weak and infirm, rode through the streets of Venice. Alas! Christendom is no more. Society no longer rests on a Christian basis, nor derives its life from Christianity through its kings and the pope. This is *my* idea of a well-organised state; first, the vicar of Christ; secondly, the Sovereign proud to be the pope's crowned and anointed vassal; under him the nobles, with the rights and laws of primogeniture, and lastly the serfs, the labourers, the artizans, hawkers and hucksters, the scum and dross and dregs of society, the *ignobile vulgus*, the οἱ πολλοί, the mob, the masses, the great unwashed, the *canaille*, trusting their persons to the

king, and their souls to the priest, and vegetating in blissful ignorance of theological controversies and political disputes, and of the boasted press, that infernal machine which manufactures most of our modern miseries!"

"There are two sides," replied Safi, "to most pictures; two certainly to yours of political economy in the middle ages. Suppose a licentious youth, such as John XII., in the papal chair, and a weak, cruel, crafty extortioner on the throne; suppose barons given up to marauding and feudal strife, dissolution of morals in the religious orders, the priests low, loose, and unlearned; and the people besotted with vice, ignorance, and sundry superstitions; suppose this, and you will have before your mind no unfaithful picture of what was often to be seen in the middle ages."

"Never, never! That is, never all at the same time, and in the same State, and unrelieved by an immensity of good which you have altogether omitted in your picture. Some such abuses as those you mention there arose here and there, once

now and then; but they were not sufficient to overcloud the glory of the church's rule. Every thing was then subordinated to her influence and command; and if abuses spread and injustice triumphed, appeal was made, not as now a-days, to popular passions and universal suffrage, but to the holy see, where the aggrieved always found a righteous tribunal, capable very often of applying a prompt and efficacious remedy."

"And if the fountain head of justice was corrupted," asked Safi, "what redress could be obtained then?"

"There have been three or four bad popes, I admit," said the old Baron; "but the holy see has always been holy. Its decisions have always been in accordance with morality and truth. Yes, Safi, and it would have been a happy thing for the world if the popes had been allowed to pursue in the sixteenth century the same policy as that which they had vigorously and firmly pursued in previous ages!"

"Providence thought otherwise," said Safi, quietly, "and I rejoice therein."

"Do you?" rejoined the Baron, dryly. "When Michael Angelo inquired of Julius II. whether he should represent him in the act of blessing, the pontiff replied, 'Give me a sword.' Perhaps he meant more by those words than the bystanders supposed."

"Thank God," said Safi, "the sword of the popes is shivered, and falling from their hands. Did not Christ say to St. Peter, 'Peter, put up thy sword into the sheath?'"

"Do you really mean, Monsieur de Barrère," inquired Roland, "that you approve such measures as the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the horrors of the Inquisition, the fires of Smithfield, the gunpowder plot, the massacre of St. Bartholemew, and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and that you would wish to see similar acts repeated and perpetuated?"

It is not known exactly what reply the Baron would have made. Mrs. Elsmere thought that the conversation was taking rather too serious a turn, and with her usual tact said, "Suppose,

Roland dear, we retire to the drawing-room before Monsieur de Barrère answers your question."

They all withdrew at the same time, after the custom in France. Frenchmen prefer the company of ladies to that of wine-bottles, and in this respect prove alike their gallantry, and good taste.

The persecution question was postponed *sine die*. Roland attached himself to Safi in *tête à tête* discourse, being naturally anxious to see of what stuff he was made. He was sufficiently master of himself to conceal the melancholy which weighed him to the earth, and affect greater interest than he really took in his companion's brilliant talk.

"Well, Roland dear," said Harriet, when they were left alone, "what do you think of Safi?"

"We must never trust foreigners, especially Italians and Frenchmen, too hastily," replied Roland, "but so far as I can discover at present he is the very man for Lizzy. I think he must

have some northern blood in his veins; he seems as noble-minded and honest as he is well-read, thoughtful, and quick."

"I am so glad you like him, dearest Roland. Lizzy's attachment to him makes me more anxious than ever that you should be with me again, not sometimes, but always, without the semblance or shadow of separation."

"There is but the semblance of it," said Roland, "I am in reality separated from all besides yourself. I have plied Catherine with every argument to induce her to consent to an open separation, but she is inexorable. Never was woman composed of less pliant materials."

"Why wait for her consent, dearest Roland, to do that which you believe and know to be right? Did not Safi give a luminous judgment on the case you submitted to him at dinner? All right-minded persons will have a like opinion on the subject. But I dread beyond measure lest Safi should hear anything which might disincline him to a marriage with Lizzy, and lead him to break off the engagement. If

you had broken finally with Paris, we could frankly tell him the whole state of the case, but how can we do so under present circumstances? He would condemn your position not only as false, but as utterly untenable. Why do you look so sad, Roland?"

"How can I look otherwise, Harriet? Am I not doomed to walk in a labyrinth of gloom? It would not, in my opinion, be wise to make any disclosure of our affairs to Safi immediately."

"Why not, dearest Roland?"

"Because it would be better to give him time to fall more deeply in love with Lizzy. When he is once thoroughly enamoured, nothing will wrench him from her. Let their hearts grow together a little while."

"But suppose Safi should in the meanwhile hear unfavourable reports?"

"Let us hope that he will not; but if he should, we must meet them as best we can."

"And is it honourable and honest to keep him in the dark? It is a matter which strictly concerns him—his interests and his inclinations."

"It certainly would be very dishonourable to keep him long in ignorance of the real state of things. The moment we are settled, everything must be fully explained. That moment must shortly arrive. I am somewhat in the condition of the martyr Hippolytus, when four wild horses were tugging at his extended wrists and ankles to tear him limb from limb. It will be impossible to endure such distracting torture long. I must come to a decision soon, and I will."

Harriet threw herself on her knees beside Roland, in a paroxysm of grief. "I implore you, dearest, dearest Roland," she cried, "by all that is sacred, as you value your life, your health, your reason, for your children's sake, for the sake of that dear, high-souled, pure Lizzy; yes, and for the sake of your sorrowing, sinful, but now most loving wife, I implore you to abide with us and brave all consequences, and never, never, more return to *her*—your misery, your pitfall, your deep, deep ruin. If she attempts to harass you, fling defiance in the

teeth of her persecutions, entrenched, as you will be then, behind the ramparts of moral right and a good conscience. As yet Safi knows nothing that could stagger him. He does not appear to have much suspicion in his character, and he has made no inquiries this evening which could lead to an untoward explanation. Anticipate his questions. If he has the generous heart for which we give him credit, he will stand by us for Lizzy's sake, in spite of every assault. But Lizzy is incapable of falsehood, and I am sure that concealment of any kind will be very repugnant to her feelings. Stay with us, dearest Roland. Tell me, oh, tell me that you will return to Paris no more!"

If Roland had been a man with any latent strength of character, he would now, at least, have been prompted to save all who were dear to him from ruin, by finally adopting a bold and decided course. Strong minds are only strengthened by obstacles, and rise above them; while the debility of weak minds becomes most apparent in the crisis where strength is most

needed. Man though Roland was, and of cultivated mind, it is to be feared that he had involuntarily allowed himself to be cowed by a woman. Catherine's dark grey eyes, and fine forehead, and inflexible will, her solemn menaces and legal rights, had perfectly awed, and (though he would have been ashamed to acknowledge it) really held him in check.

"I must return to Paris, dearest," he said, "once more, but you may depend that it will be for the last time. I have left papers there of great importance. I will go and make every arrangement, and be with you again soon to part no more."

This assurance seemed to afford Harriet some little relief, and after several wakeful hours, she wept and sighed herself to sleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

“ Remorse, the fatal egg by Pleasure laid
In every bosom where her nest is made,
Hatched by the beams of truth, denies him rest,
And proves a raging scorpion in his breast.”

Cowper.—The Progress of Error.

“ SHALL we take a walk in the wood, Lizzy,” said Harriet, one morning when they were again left, with the children, at St. Amand. We will stroll along the avenues by which Safi generally comes. Perhaps we may meet him, and in your happiness I may for awhile forget my own sorrows. Oh, Lizzy, how bitter is the fruit of the forbidden tree! But come, let us

lose no time. The sky is now clear, and the dry leaves, that strew the paths so thickly, will rustle beneath our feet."

"Shall we desire Xavier to follow us?" asked Lizzy.

"No, dearest, why should we be annoyed by having him at our heels here in the country?"

"It was not for myself I asked, dearest Harriet, I only thought of you. I should be so sorry if you were startled by anything in the wood."

"And what could I be startled by? Lions and tigers, or brigands and boa-constrictors?"

"No, no; of course not. But the servants at the chateau say that two wolves were seen last winter in the street of the nearest village, and that the year before a wolf in this neighbourhood strangled twenty-seven sheep in a field, and a calf in a farm-yard."

"Pooh, nonsense, Lizzy dear! It's all a fable, depend on it. The wolves in the Jura must be very hard pressed by hunger and frost before

they would venture as far as this. Come along, Lizzy: I am not afraid of wolves."

There was little in the scene through which they passed to relieve the sadness of a sorrowful mind. Harriet had not sufficient confidence in the firmness of her husband's resolution to prevent even her hopeful spirit from foreboding a train of disasters. The enjoyments and promises of her early years were withered and blasted like the brown leaves on which she trod, and the

"Autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,"

seemed responsive to the inward moanings of her own bosom.

The sisters' walk in the forest was neither so lonely nor so unobserved as they had fancied it would be. A Capuchin friar, who had appeared in the hamlet that morning, watched them as they turned into a broad alley in the wood, and taking rapidly a circuitous route arrived before them on an open sward where four avenues met.

Harriet's enfeebled health, anxiety, and sorrows, had rendered her prematurely nervous, and she trembled when, in this lonely spot, they came suddenly on one in so strange an attire. His hood was drawn over his head and eyes, his bare feet were sandalled, and his coarse brown cloth dress was girded by a rope, from which hung a rosary and crucifix. In his hand he held a small tin box for receiving alms, which he shook as the sisters approached him.

"Ladies," he said, "I crave your charity for a convent of poor Capuchins."

Harriet started, for the voice though speaking in French, seemed familiar to her. Lizzy, who had a taste for monks and monasteries, felt for her purse, and dropped a piece of silver into the box.

"Where is your convent situated?" she inquired.

"At Auvigne, Mademoiselle, about three leagues distant."

"And how many monks are there residing in it?"

"Twenty-seven in all, Mademoiselle, and they lead a jolly life enough, though, perhaps, you would hardly think it." Lizzy looked amazed at the levity of this reply from one in so grave an attire; but her attention was instantly drawn away to Harriet, who plucked her by the sleeve, shrieked, swooned, and fell upon the sward.

The Capuchin sprung forward to assist Lizzy in raising her sister from the grass, in doing which his cowl fell back, and discovered, not a shaven crown, but a magnificent head of hair, and the too well-known face of Walter Dunraven.

"Begone, wretched man!" exclaimed Lizzy, "you are the author of all our distress. The very sight of you has made my sister faint. Leave her to me. Your touch is defilement. Begone!"

Walter Dunraven's finer feelings had been blunted, and his bland manners rendered coarse by a series of excesses into which he had plunged, with vicious companions, in consequence of the loss of Harriet Elsmere.

"Not so easily, my pretty Lizzy!" he replied, laughing. "I have not come all this way for

nothing, nor have I tortured myself with this infernally uncomfortable frock, without an object in view. I came here to have a talk with Harriet: and I will have it too; d——d if I don't, when she's out of this fainting fit."

"Oh, Walter, what language!" said Lizzy, in a tone of bitter reproach. "And from one in that garb. How changed you are; how low you have fallen! Good taste, at least, if not good principle, used to preserve you from profanity in your talk. What have you to do with a monkish habit? You are a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"What's your text, Lizzy? Upon my soul, you would make a capital parson. Preach away, my pet. I like to hear you talk, though it's only to scold. It puts me in mind of old times. Harriet's getting better now. She'll be all right in a few minutes."

While he spoke thus, Walter Dunraven was holding Harriet in his arms and supporting her on one knee, with her head leaning on his breast. She had no sooner recovered her senses and perceived the position she was in, than she endea-

voured, without speaking, to tear herself from his embrace. After a few moment's retention he released her, and suffered her to stand.

"Come away, Lizzy," she said, trembling violently, while she took her sister's arm and pushed on toward the Château.

Walter Dunraven immediately planted himself before them in the middle of the path.

"No, no, Harriet, my sweetest," he said, "that won't do at all. I'm not going to be done in that way. You must listen to what I have to say. I am not come to frighten you, my darling, nor to worry your nerves. I only want to reason with you quietly. Ever since you gave me the slip at Ghent I've been as wretched as possible—wandering about like a homeless cat—rushing into one wild freak after another, trying to kill time, and to kill thought, and to kill, what I can never kill, the memory of my love for you. But it's no use, Harriet, it's no use to strive against one's destiny. I can never love any one else as I have loved you. There isn't a rose in the garden that seems to me worth plucking, after you, my fairest

flower. Come and live with me again, Harry, and let us be regularly spliced. I know you attach great importance to all those ceremonial observances. You are as free to marry now as any virgin in Christendom. It shall all be done in the most unexceptionable manner. We'll be married by the parson and the clerk, with banns, and witnesses, and registrar, and ring, and 'Wilt thou have this man?' and 'With my body I thee worship,' and *toute la sacrée boutique*. Now don't be hankering after that d——d simpleton, Roland. He's only making a fool of you and himself too. He will never be able to make up his mind about anything. A feeble character, my own Harry, very, very feeble; and weak people are the most mischievous of all. Within the last few days I have been to Paris and have learned all about him. He's never going to leave his wife for you; don't flatter yourself. Why, he's seen everywhere with her. If there is a ball at the Tuileries, or at the English Embassy, they are there together. If you go to the Bois de

Boulogne about four or five o'clock, there they are sitting side by side in the same carriage. And will you be content, my sweet Harriet, to share a divided husband, to be degraded into his concubine, and humbugged by promises which will never be fulfilled? As soon as I had learned all about his pretty proceedings in Paris, I returned to Cremlieu, where I had been staying, and bethought myself how I should best manage to get an interview with you. I did not want to fall foul of Roland; that wouldn't suit my purpose at all. I sent my valet, therefore, to the convent of Capuchin Friars at Auvigne to bamboozle the righteous fathers into lending a cast-off costume of their order, saying it was intended for a *very* pious young gentleman who was going to play the part of a holy Capuchin in some private theatricals. At the same time I sent them a brace of hares and a couple of rabbits for the consolation of their stomachs, and a jingle of crowns 'for the good of the young gentleman's soul!' A devilish fine idea that, wasn't it Lizzy? Well, don't look so so very solemn, Lizzy. Try and

persuade Harry to embark in the same boat with me, and scapegrace as I am, perhaps, now, I shall turn out a prodigy of virtue. No more improprieties! I'll be as correct and demure as a Quaker. No more profanity! I'll study Tasso and Tommy Moore again, and refine my language and taste. No more libations to Bacchus! I'll be as temperate as Goldsmith's Hermit, and have—

'A scrip with herbs and fruit supplied,
And water from the spring.'

"No more peccadilloes with the daughters of Eve—the lovely fallen angels! No, I will be faithful to the only one I really love, and as chaste as Diana, so help me—"

"Stop, Walter," cried Lizzy, "stop! Do not trifle with that holy and awful name. It is a sad sign when people have the names of God and of Satan on their lips at every moment and on every occasion. You *are* changed, Walter, since I knew you, and changed for the worse."

"Very possibly, Lizzy, and not to be wondered

at, all things considered. But don't be too hard upon a man who is now on the very point of conversion. I have been, it's true, like a colt turned out to grass, but with a very little kind care and attention on Harriet's part, I shall soon become as sleek and orderly as the best curried gelding that ever ran at Doncaster races."

"Let us go home, Lizzy," said Harriet; "I do not want to talk with him. I thought I had taken leave of him for ever."

"Well, Harriet," said Walter Dunraven, "if you will go, I will not prevent you, but at least I will walk by your side. I love to watch your precious footfalls, and if no one were watching me, I should kiss the prints of your pretty feet upon the dewy grass. I must tell you and Liz a good story about this reverend garb of mine. In coming this way by the train this morning, I had no companion in the railway carriage but a dowdy elderly dame who eyed and ogled me with great interest. She was evidently very anxious to speak to me, and rather vexed that I did not at all encourage this inclination. At last, being

unable to contain herself any longer, she addressed me as a Capuchin Father, and, after many apologies, began to describe her case. She told me with great volubility, and no less prolixity, that her conscience was sorely troubled, that she had not been able to sleep all night, that she felt quite ill, and that it would be an indescribable relief to her if I would there and then hear her confession, and shrive her sinful soul! Here was a pretty fix! If I refused, I should, I thought, inevitably betray my assumed character, and if I consented, I was sure to make a bungling business of it, having never learned the trade. I felt, therefore, that the safest thing for me to do was to let Goody Fear-god have her own way, and to say as little as possible myself, and that little neither in French or English, but in Latin. I had an inkling moreover to learn a woman's secrets, and to know what confession, which I had heard so much about, really was. They talk of female curiosity, but it's all stuff; male curiosity is quite as strong. Well, I assented to the old dame's im-

portunities, and she prepared herself accordingly. I began by making the sign of the cross, for I was sufficiently up to snuff to know that would be apropos on any occasion. 'Now a little Latin!' I thought, and forthwith recited with great solemnity the two first lines of Horace:

"Mæcenas atavis edite regibus,
O, et præsidium et dulce decus meum."

The quotation succeeded admirably, and Sister *Scrupuleuse* began. Oh, what a yarn she spun! I am not going to reveal precisely what the chatterbox confessed. No! There's honour among thieves; but this I will say, that I never heard, nor could have conceived such a concatenation and jumble of scruples, squeamishness, petty pieties; and petty peccadilloes, inanities, gossip, self-applause, and self-accusation! And after all I believe the frail feminine has not done as many naughty things in fifty years as I do every twenty-four hours. But that's all over now, and when we are married, my darling Harry, I shall be thoroughly whitewashed. At

last my penitent paused. I gave her a gentle scolding, and some unexceptionably sound advice, and gave her absolution in the following most appropriate form of words, which school-day recollections brought opportunely to my service:

*"Arma virumque cano, Trojæ qui primus ab oris
Italiam fato profugus Lavinæque venit
Litora."*

"Everything seemed going on well, and I thought I had played my part to perfection, when Mistress Mumbleprayers, looking at me as if I had omitted or forgotten something, said: 'Will you please, sir, to give me a penance?'

"'Oh! certainly,' I said, 'I'll give you a penance, by all means. Hold your tongue for three hours, and if you speak once during the three, then be silent for six.' I shall never forget the look of angry misgiving she darted at me, but she spoke not again.

"Ah, my sweet Harriet! you neither laugh nor smile. That's not kind. Do speak to me.

Let me hear your voice once more. Do not drive me to desperation. If you have become good, it is no reason you should become cruel."

"Walter," replied Harriet! "it is not I who am cruel; you are cruel to yourself. It had been better, far better, if we had never spoken again, and if I speak, it is only because you force me. God forbid that I should laugh now at any of your profane acts and speeches. I tell you again, Walter, that I am not free to marry again; and if I were, I would not do it. So long as Roland lives, he is my only husband; and even if I were to survive him, I would not espouse another. I live only to repent of the misery I have brought on others and myself. And, oh! if the words of one who has been your companion in sin can have any weight, let me counsel and conjure you also to repent ere it is too late. I will not speak to you of the next life, for it does not become me to preach; I will only remind you of the sad and terrible consequences which will ensue in this present life, if you persist in an unreformed and impenitent

course. You will find less and less satisfaction in everything you undertake; your vicious pleasures will fill you with increasing disgust; your conscience will become more and more seared, and return to the paths of virtue will by and by appear to you impossible; your worldly affairs will become embarrassed, your fortune will melt away, your friends desert you, your spirits droop, your health decline, and your lonely hours be embittered by fruitless remorse and black despair; while death, and probably premature death, will stare you in the face, and fold you, unwilling and unprepared, in his pitiless arms."

"Yes, Walter!" added Lizzy; "and after death come judgment and retribution. The mask is dropped, and the soul appears in its true character and condition before the face of God. How will you be able to meet His awful gaze, Walter, if you have not even made an effort to reform, to pray, to repent, and to be saved?"

"Pray!" exclaimed Walter Dunraven; "what nonsense you talk, Lizzy. Why it would be like whistling on a rough coast in a thunder-storm. Which of the gods would take pity on me, as the sick raven, in *Æsop*, said to his mother, when she advised him to pray? He had stolen flesh from victims offered to every one of the gods; and my case is not much better than his."

"Walter!" replied Lizzy, "you are mistaken, greatly and grievously mistaken. There is no depth of degradation, doubt and wretchedness so abject and profound; but that a man may pray in it, and by prayer arise and escape. I have heard of one who said, "Oh my God! if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul;" and I believe that even such a prayer, if offered in sincerity, would find its way to the ear of a merciful God."

Lizzy had just uttered the last sentence when Safi emerged from a transverse avenue at a little distance. He had gone to the chateau by

another route than that which he usually took, and having there learned that the ladies had strolled into the wood, came to meet them on their return.

On seeing him approach, the pseudo-Capuchin made an obeisance, and disappeared among the hazels and hollies in an opposite direction.

CHAPTER XXII.

"In love, if love be love, if love be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers :
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all."

Tennyson's Idylls of the King.

THE sight of a Capuchin friar in close conversation with Harriet and Lizzy had puzzled Safi, and he became still more perplexed when he observed that Lizzy was pale and Harriet agitated. He inquired about the strange companion of their walk, who he was, how they came to meet him, and what had brought him that way, but to his astonishment and confusion the sisters were evidently disinclined to be communicative on the

subject. They said, indeed, that the man had accosted them in the first instance, and had solicited an alms for his convent, at Auvigne, that he had then become very talkative, and that, though they gave him no encouragement, he had persisted in walking at their side.

“And what did he talk about, Lizzy?” asked Safi.

“Oh!” said Lizzy, in a tone which rather indicated a wish to get rid of such questions altogether, “he talked a great deal of rubbish about some good old soul who wanted to make her confession to him in the railway carriage: but look, dearest Scipio, what a profusion of beautiful flowers there is just here in this sheltered nook! I love to see them maintaining their ground, and forcing their way amid the falling leaves, as if to check the withering progress of autumn, and the desolating invasion of winter. Look! is not this a little gem, this tiny pale yellowish-green blossom, the pyrola, or winter green? And do look at this hyacinth-like squill, and such a sweet little tri-coloured violet, the pansy-violet or

heart's-ease, and a lovely crocus, the colohicum autumnale, and the red campion, this bright rose-coloured lychnis. Now you must admire them, Scipio, and, indeed, I am sure you do."

And Scipio did admire the wild flowers, and helped his fair companions to find more. Like all really noble minded men, he had in him the very essence of politeness, and he would not, therefore, revert to inquiries which were manifestly distasteful, yet he could not but think with extreme surprise of a "regular" priest having talked a great deal of rubbish about a person who wished to confess to him, knowing, as he did, that, in point of fact, Roman Catholic clergymen, even the least worthy and respectable, always scrupulously avoid making any allusion to what has passed between them and their penitents. Why, he asked himself anxiously, why did they make any mystery of what seems to be a matter of little importance? Is it possible that this lovely creature, to whom I have opened all my heart, and who has hitherto appeared so ingenuous, and transparent as crystal, should have

secrets which she reserves from me? The question which he thus proposed to himself was a sad one, but greater sadness and perplexity still awaited him on his arrival at home late in the same evening.

An anonymous letter had been brought by the post, and notwithstanding his contempt for that cowardly means of communication, its contents caused him greater anxiety than any letter which he had ever received before.

It ran as follows:—

“ ————, 1859.

“ DEAR SAUL,

“ Beware how you tread. There are many traps set in the woods. ‘*Incedis per ignes.*’ Remember that, old chap! The damsel is fair to look upon, and talks glibly withal. Nevertheless, don’t make a spring in the dark. Single gentlemen are very easily taken in and done for, in these days of gadding and gallivanting abroad, when nobody knows the antecedents of three-fourths of his acquaintances.

“ You fancy that ‘Mrs. Elsmere’ is Mrs.

Elsmere. It's all fudge. Roland Elsmere's real wife is with him in Paris; but, like Solomon, the wisest of men, he thinks a plurality of wives very desirable. Perhaps you will consider his partiality for womankind carried a little too far. This question I leave unsolved, as I am not in the habit of discussing nice points of morality. I merely advertise you of a fact which it concerns you to know. The caution comes from a sincere, though unknown, friend. Do not despise it.

"You need not take my word as voucher for the truth of what I tell you. Inquire for yourself. Go to Paris. Roland Elsmere lives near the English embassy, in the Rue St. Honoré. Ask of any of his neighbours, or acquaintances, and you will discover the accuracy of what is here stated. He not only has another, and a true wife, whom he lives with, but he is seen abroad with her quite as much as is considered sensible, and manly, and *à la mode* in Paris, and, indeed, a great deal more than one-half of the Parisian husbands who move in society."

This letter, which was in French, closed abruptly, and without a signature. The reader will, no doubt, have already guessed that it was written by Walter Dunraven. The handwriting seemed that of a foreigner, but he was well skilled in counterfeits of this kind. Its object, so far as he had any definite scope in writing it, was to raise a turmoil in St. Amand, to gather such a storm around Harriet's head, as would inevitably compel her to loosen from her moorings. He felt convinced that Roland would not have courage to tear himself from Catherine when it came to the point, and he indulged a wild hope that, when Harriet was far removed from *him*, he himself might be able to prosecute his own suit with a better chance of success. In addition to these vague motives which influenced him in writing the letter, he had been stirred by that phrenetic love of mischief-making, which is not unfrequently the result of a long course of crime, and which, more than any other corrupt propensity, assim-

lates a man to that awful being whose language is—"Evil be thou my good!" By destroying the happiness of Safi and Lizzy, Walter Dunraven had nothing to gain, except the gloomy and morbid satisfaction of imparting to others some portion of that misery which was beginning to corrode his own breast. Safi passed the long night in ruminating on the contents of the anonymous epistle. He revolved in his mind also the hesitation with which Lizzy had accepted his first proposal of marriage, the extraordinary case of a double matrimonial contract which Roland Elsmere had put to his guests at the dinner-table, and the incident, to him still unexplained, which had occurred in the forest the day before. These considerations, equally hostile to sleep, and to tranquillity, he counterbalanced with other reflections of a more hopeful and consolatory description. He thought of Lizzy and all her sweetness, and the innumerable signs, which it was impossible to mistake of her possessing deep thoughtful-

ness, self-control, conscientiousness, self-denial, loving-kindness, tenderness, forbearance, humility, and amiability towards all.

"These," he said, "are not qualities that can be assumed like a garment, and thrown aside when they no longer serve a turn, neither can they, by any ingenuity, be counterfeited with success for any length of time, like the cant of piety, and the forms of religious observances."

He thought of all the fondness which Lizzy had evinced for him, of the glowing and rapturous hours they had passed together, of the delightful coincidence of their views and feelings on a wide range of different subjects, and how literature, indeed, history, art, nature, ethics, and even religion, became invested with additional charms, in consequence of their supplying such numberless points of contact for Lizzy's predilections and his own. He thought of the thrilling tones of her silver voice, and the loving splendour of her dark eyes, and the pressure of her gentle arm, and the drooping of her beauteous head upon his shoulder, and the

thousand tender embraces ending only to be renewed.

“No,” he said, “I will never, never believe that Lizzy can be false. There *may*, if there be any truth in this paltry letter, there may be some mystery hanging over Elsmere and his affairs, but it is utterly inconceivable that my good and virtuous Lizzy can be a *particeps criminis*. If anything so dreadful could be, I should lose all confidence in virtue, love, or friendship; the current of my existence would be poisoned, and I should be strongly tempted to turn misogynist and misanthrope.”

Early in the morning Safi rose, and started for Paris, taking Auvigne on the way. Here he stopped, and proceeded immediately to the Capuchin convent near the western gate of the little town. The porter, who was one of the lay-brothers, informed him that all the inmates, himself excepted, were in the choir, chanting their office, but that if he would like to wait in the church, the *père gardien* would come to him very shortly. Safi retired accordingly, and ad-

vancing near the altar, listened for about a quarter of an hour, to the coarse and lugubrious psalmody of the monks, who were altogether concealed from view by a wall-screen, which separated the choir from the rest of the church. The Guardian then half-opened the door of the vestry, and beckoned to Safi to come to him.

"*Mon Père,*" said Safi, "I beg pardon for having interrupted you; but I am anxious to know, and should feel obliged if you will tell me, whether either of the fathers or lay-brothers of your convent was at St. Amand yesterday?"

"Where is St. Amand?" asked the Guardian. "I never heard of it before."

Safi explained the position of the hamlet; and was immediately assured by the friar that none of his community had been there on the previous day, and that not one of them had walked even a mile away from their dwelling.

"How very strange!" exclaimed Safi. "I certainly saw a Capuchin there. He was dressed in precisely the same attire as yourself; it differed in no respect whatever, except that he had

drawn his cowl over his head. He was collecting alms for his convent, which was, he stated, at Auvigne."

The Guardian put his forefinger to his forehead, as if he had a clue to the discovery of the pretended friar, but he repressed all exclamation. He remembered that a habit of the order had been lent to a gentleman in the neighbourhood, and he was sensible of the imprudence of which he had been guilty in permitting the loan. He smiled, therefore, and said :

"We never go about begging alms. We depend for our livelihood on the voluntary offerings of the people, which are made chiefly in this church; and—thanks be to Heaven—they are sufficient to supply all our wants. If we were, as we never have been yet, absolutely in danger of starvation, we should ring the convent bell, as a signal of distress, and the good folk hereabouts would come to us from all sides, and provision our camp."

"Is there any other religious house of your order in this part of the country?" inquired Saffi.

"None," said the Guardian. "Not one nearer than Paris."

"Would you allow me, for my entire satisfaction, to see all the brethren?"

"Undoubtedly. You are quite welcome. Follow me."

So saying, the friar opened a low door, which communicated with the choir; Safi entered with him, and a somewhat strange picture broke on his view. The monks were kneeling on the bare floor, in two rows, with a single light before them, and a crucifix almost as large as life. They were still reciting a portion of the Psalter, in the tones of a monotonous, and in the lips of the rude friars, most inharmonious, Gregorian chant.

Safi paused.

"You can walk by them," whispered the Guardian, "and examine each face, if you please."

Safi did so attentively; but failed to discover the slightest resemblance between them and the dark-visaged young stranger whom he had seen with Harriet and Lizzy in the wood. He

thanked the Guardian for his attention, and left the convent with heaviness in his heart. "Have I then been deceived," he asked of himself, "by my own Lizzy? No! impossible; incredible. It is she who has been deceived, the lie was not hers, but that of the Capuchin imposter. I will mistrust any appearances rather than her. No mortal could be trusted, if Lizzy could be untrue."

In a few hours Safi arrived in Paris, and made his way forthwith to the residence of Roland Elsmere, in the Rue St. Honoré. On inquiring if Mr. and Mrs. Elsmere lived there, he was informed that they did; that Mrs. Elsmere was at home, and that her husband, who was then out, would return shortly. This was enough for Safi. He had no immediate concern with Roland, nor any wish to come in contact with him. He withdrew, without leaving his name. The colour fled from his cheeks, his head became dizzy, and but for a railing, by which he held for support, he would have fallen on the pavement. He soon recovered, however,

and walking to a seat beneath the still foliated chestnut-trees in the Jardin des Tuileries, reconsidered the dismal fact, of which he was now certified beyond all possibility of doubt. His thoughts again reverted to the conversation which Roland had started at dinner on a certain case of divorce, and he now plunged to the conclusion that the very peculiar circumstances which Elsmere had mentioned to his guests, were in fact, none other than his own. "Yes!" he exclaimed, "a dawn is breaking through the gloom; and Lizzy may still be mine! Harriet, I am convinced, is Roland Elsmere's first and real wife, though divorced perhaps by the law of the state. The righteousness of my Lizzy will come forth as clear as the light, and her just dealing as the noon-day. Roland's residence with this so-called Mrs. Elsmere in Paris is a mystery indeed, but time and inquiry may explain even that in a manner which will exculpate both the sisters."

In all this Safi nobly proved himself to be a true

lover and a faithful friend. His conduct was strikingly contrasted with that of those inconstant butterflies in human form who are always ready to fly off from their friends at the slightest provocation, and to construe the least untoward appearance into an evidence of unworthiness or of guilt. Aristotle, in his book of *Ethica*, insists on the expediency of a man's straining toward the extreme of excess, when he feels himself tempted to fall into that of defect, in order that, by this means he may reach the happy mean, between the two, in which every virtue consists. Upon this principle, Safi, whom circumstances were tempting to distrust, strenuously endeavored to urge his mind into the utmost extreme of confidence in Lizzy's truth and virtue, and in a paroxysm of fidelity, whenever the train stopped between Paris and his home, he scribbled with a pencil some verses, of which the following is a faithful translation :

I KNOW MY LOVE.

I know my love would slave for me ;
I know she would not grudge to be
A prisoner to set me free.

I know my love, with bleeding feet,
Would thorns and flints with welcome greet,
To make my thistles violet sweet.

I know my love would take my pain,
And lodge it in her heart and brain,
If that could make me well again.

I know my love would cheerly brave
The night cold washing of the wave,
Me from the raft adrift to save.

I know my love would toil thro' snows,
Or hot sands where no fountain flows,
To give my weariness repose.

I know my love her breast would bare,
Accepting every arrow there,
Mine own the cruel shaft to spare.

I know my love, till dawning light,
Thro' the dim watches of the night,
Would tend me, like an angel quite.

I know my love would cease to be,
Would moulder 'neath the cypress tree,
If death to her were life to me.

Suspect her? Never! just as soon
Would I believe the sun could swoon,
And wilful wanderings lose the moon.

I know my love. The world is wide,
And yet the world hath none beside
So true, so generous, and so tried.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Uso e natura sì la privilegia,
Che, perchè 'l capo reo lo mondo torca,
Sola va dritta, e 'l mal cammin dispregia.

By use and nature she is privileged so,
That straight she walks, and scorns all evil ways,
While guilty minds the wildering world misleads.

Dante. Il Purgatorio.

LET not the man of conscience and principle who, in the midst of every obstacle and opposition, steadily pursues the path of charity and rectitude, suppose for a moment that he is abandoned to a chaos of chances and forgotten by the great Distributor of punishments and rewards. When the clouds are darkening deepest overhead,

and at the very juncture which seems most unfavourable and hopeless, remedial operations are carried on by an unseen Providence, which ere long dissipate the gloom, and bring in an abundance of recompense and relief ; and if human agents were wanting to complete the work of righteous retribution, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field, and the fishes of the deep, the rocks and woods, and the winds and waters would combine their forces, and concert some measures for the encouragement and support of afflicted virtue.

On Safi's arrival at the chateau, where he had been staying, he was greeted with a doleful tale. A little lad, they told him, who went by the name of Pierre Pétitot, had been sent to him with a letter from St. Amand the day before. He had not made his appearance at the seat of Safi's friend, Monsieur de la Touche, before it was getting dusk, and he was then crying very bitterly and appeared dreadfully frightened. He had loitered, and sitting down on a stone, had leaned against a tree, and fallen asleep.

Pierre did not know how long he had slept before he was aroused from his slumber by a sensation like that of ropes being tied round his legs. His amazement was equal to his terror when he beheld two glittering slimy snakes coiled round his ankles, knees, and thighs. He screamed, of course; but no response came, save the rustling of the breezes through the falling leaves. The snakes, spitting and hissing, seemed to menace little Pierre with instant extinction, and he fancied, in his panic, that they were two malevolent demons come to seize upon him, at the same time, in body and soul. He discovered, however, by degrees, that the odious reptiles did not bite, or that their sting was innocuous. He tried in vain to make use of his hands in order to extricate himself from their loathsome folds, but "the lambent homage of their arrowy tongues" had still such terrific power over the poor lad, that it paralyzed all his efforts again and again. Taking up a stick which had fallen from a tree in the last storm, he began to poke and smite his enemies

with all possible ingenuity. This stratagem, unfortunately served to raise up new and fiercer assaults on the part of his foes, for, loosening their tails, they struck little Pierre's legs in every direction with pitiless severity. Never, for his worst behaviour, had he smarted half so sorely under the chastening rod of Pierre Pétitot, père, or the more formidable lash of Marc Martel, the village schoolmaster. Tears, cries, shouts and screams seemed only to exasperate the snakes, without bringing aid to the sufferer. At last, he bethought himself of a knife, which he had in his breast pocket. Unbuttoning his jacket, he took out the weapon, and in doing so, a letter of importance from Lizzy to Scipio Saffell, unobserved upon the grass. Summoning up all his courage, Pierre now made a desperate effort to rid himself of his tormentors, and, in spite of all their lubric agility, succeeded at last in cutting them in pieces. This feat accomplished, he had made the best of his way to the chateau of Monsieur de la Touche, still smarting with pain, and had

told his tale of terror, with sobs and shiverings, in the midst of the servants' hall.

"And what did you come here for, Pierre?" they asked.

"To bring a letter for the gentleman," replied Pierre.

"Which gentleman? Monsieur de la Touche?"

"No: for *our* gentleman."

"*Your* gentleman? Oh! that is Monsieur Safi," said the servants laughing.

Pierre then fumbled in his pockets, and turned them inside outwards, but no letter could be found.

The little messenger looked perfectly woe-begone, and exclaimed:

"I have lost it!" in a tone of extreme bitterness.

A child's sorrow is easily consoled. It was too late for Pierre to think of returning that night. He was allowed to remain in the chateau, and in less than half an hour his laugh was the loudest in the kitchen while he reveled in ever

changing gambols with the little daughter of the Maître d'Hôtel.

In the meanwhile, Safi had arrived from his brief excursion to Paris. His grief for the loss of the letter was the greater, because no search could be made for it till the morning's light. He was dressed at dawn, and Pierre was soon ready to accompany him through the forest. The heavy dews, the brushwood, and the soddened autumnal foliage which bestrewed the paths, made them as wet to walk in as a brook, or the bed of a shallow river. It was impossible to retrace with exactitude the latter portion of the way by which Pierre had come to the chateau, seeing that he had entirely forgotten what turnings he had taken when he fled terrified from the snakes he had slain, as if even their lifeless skins contained some principle of destruction. Safi suspected that the letter might have fallen from Pierre's pocket when he was engaged in battle with these monstrous worms, and, therefore, impressed on him the necessity of finding the precise spot where the struggle had taken

place. They found it more easily than they had expected. The carcasses of Pierre's enemies were lying on the field of combat, hacked, and gashed with Pierre's rude pocket-knife, and severed head from tail. Near them also lay the precious document which Safi sought, a letter addressed to himself in Lizzy's hand. It was steeped in heavy dew, like the fleece of Gideon, and like it also, served to Safi as a sign of the favour of Heaven. The copious moisture of the night had obliterated many of the words, and Safi perceiving that some time would be required to decipher it all, sent Pierre on to St. Amand, and read as he walked.

“Au Chateau de St. Amand,

———, 1859.

“MY DEAREST FRIEND,

“The moment has now arrived in which it is absolutely necessary that I should write to you about many things of which to speak is acutest pain, and to think is continual sorrow. I have looked forward to this with

dread from the day—the never-to-be-forgotten day—when you first said you loved me, and the nearer and more inevitably it approached, the more I recoiled from it with unspeakable repugnance. Alas, alas! that I am compelled to publish the shame of others. Alas! that I am obliged to turn informer against my own sister—a sister whom I so tenderly love. It is she herself who desires that I should now write to you. It is she who insists that you should no longer be kept in ignorance of things which it concerns you to know. When you have read this letter you will understand why I begged you at the first not to be too hasty, why I told you that I would never leave my sister until she was more settled: and you will see also why I could not tell you then that which it is my imperative duty to tell you now.

“Roland Elsmere and Harriet were the happiest of pairs, when the serpent crept into their garden. My sister, who was very young and rather thoughtless, fell, during her husband's absence in Germany through the unfathomable

arts of one who had been that husband's most intimate friend. Her fall has ever been to me an impenetrable mystery: her repentance and reformation which followed caused me no surprise; that I expected, and looked forward to it with sure hope. I knew that the remembrance of happier and innocent years, the loving and faithful husband she had injured, the sweet babes she had deserted, the home she had lost, and the sister from whom she was alienated, would make her wretched. I knew that the atmosphere of vice would soon be disgusting to her, that virtue was the only element in which her spirit could breathe freely.

"Harriet repented, but, alas! too late to avoid a long train of bitter and penal sufferings, for Roland had, in the meanwhile, obtained a divorce. I had resolved to make any sacrifice, and incur any obloquy, in order to befriend and console my sister whenever she should sincerely repent of the step she had taken. As soon as I heard of her retreating from Ghent to London, I prepared

to join her. My relations and friends raised quite a storm of objections, and implored me not to go. They warned me that I should injure my own reputation, without ever being able to restore my sister's, that I should estrange myself from my best friends, wither my own prospects, and find myself at last alone in the world. Their reasonings appeared to me to be based entirely on worldly expediency, and I did not, therefore, pay very great attention to them, and whether they were sound or unsound, my love for my sister rose above them, and overruled my conduct. We met, and cast in our lot together. Sorrow and remorse had greatly altered Harriet, but my attachment to her was undiminished, and her very sorrow was sacred. The partner of her aberration had neither maltreated nor deserted her. Her repentance sprung from interior sources, and was not occasioned merely by outward difficulties and disappointment. On the divorce having been obtained, her lover became her suitor, but he sued in vain. She would not marry him, nor ever will again be united with

any but her first and true husband. She has resisted all his importunities, and never thought to see him again, when she was yesterday overwhelmed with surprise and distress by his presenting himself in the wood, under the disguise of a Capuchin, and forcing his conversation upon us, and renewing his suit.

“Need I, my dearest friend, tell you more of Harriet’s history? You have heard it already, and from Roland’s own lips. He is kind and good and we love him dearly; but he is unfortunately wanting in decision of character. He has promised to return to St. Amand in a few days, and to break the last link which fetters him to a wife, who is no wife except by the law of England, which is a flagrant violation of the law of Christ. He has promised this, I say, but the event only can prove how far it will be fully and satisfactorily accomplished. Our anxiety is intense, for on this crisis peace, health, life, and everything earthly, depend. In the meanwhile, you, my dearest Scipio, are free. Yes, though I love you as I have never loved before, nor shall

ever love again, I renounce all claim upon you (if claim I have) in virtue of any promises or declarations which you have made to me. If you feel that, by an alliance with Harriet Elsmere's sister, and Roland Elsmere's sister-in-law, you would degrade yourself in society, frat your spirits, damage your interests, blight your prospects, embarrass your plans, and ensure a large inheritance of sorrow and regret, in this case, dearest, let us meet once more, and then—part for ever. What the scythe is to the tall grass, and the reap-hook to the tawny corn, and the axe to the stout trunk, and the frost to the sweet buds, and the plough-share to the field-flower, and the hurricane to the green sapling, that will your withdrawal be to the peace and bloom of my heart. I shall live on like a branch half-broken and half-withered, to which cloud and sunshine, drought and dew are alike. I shall antedate widowhood. I shall follow the funeral of my hopes, as a mourner whose eyes are dim with weeping."

Safi had read so far, when, lifting his eyes from

the letter, he saw a female figure emerge from a cross-path at the end of an avenue in the wood. She was followed at some little distance by a man-servant and her maid, and Safi soon recognised in her, through the morning mist, the graceful form and soul-lighted countenance of his own beloved Lizzy. Their steps quickened as they saw each other approach, and when they met, their hands clasped with fonder fervour than ever, and in a low, but firm and affectionate voice, Safi exclaimed :

“Never; never!”

Lizzy gazed at him through her tears, with looks of intensest love and admiration, exclaiming in return, “For ever, for ever!”

And what meant they—those pure and ardent lovers—by exclamations in themselves so opposite as “Never, never,” “For ever, for ever?” They meant precisely one and the same thing; and if their emotions had, at the moment, allowed them to express what these words comprised, Safi would have said, “I will never, never abandon thee because thou art afflicted and tried

in the path of duty and virtue;" and Lizzy would have responded, "I am thine, dearest love, for ever, for ever, and for ever thine. Thy brilliant parts charm my imagination, but thy true nobility of spirit enamours and fixes all my heart. Thou art the husband for the day of adversity, the bereaved fireside, the couch of sickness and of pain."

"And why," asked Safi, "are you wandering here, my sweet Lizzy, in the misty morning, over the wet weeds and matted leaves, among the brakes and bare branches of the withering woods. You are like Thisbe in the wild forest, flying affrighted from the lioness,* you, who should rather, like fair Proserpine, in the plains of Enna, be gathering sweet-scented flowers from bright gardens and sunny meads."

"And yet," replied Lizzy, "I would rather meet with the fate of Thisbe, and die in the wood with my Pyramus, than cull flowers in the fields of Enna, to be carried off by the terrible Pluto."†

* Ovidii Metamorphoses, Lib. iv. Fab. iv.

† Ovidii Metamorphoses, Lib. v. Fab. vi.

"Well retorted, sweetest Lizzy!" exclaimed Safi, "Ruperti, and Porson, and Heyne, and Dissenius, and Schrevelius, and Hermann together could not have made a more fitting and classical reply. Yes, it is true, Lizzy, no name of maiden or goddess, extolled by poets of Greece and Rome, can express more than one faint aspect of all that you are to me. You are my Thisbe, for your wandering in the wood; my Proserpine, for your flower gathering; my Pallas, for your wisdom; my Cynthia, for your purity; my Medea, for your magical charms; my Ariadne, for your starry brightness; my Philomena, for your sweet notes; my Melpomene, for your serious and poetic thought; my Pandora for the plenitude of your gifts. But what has brought you here, dearest, at this early hour?"

"We are come in search of little Pierre, fearing that he was lost in the wood."

"Pierre is safe," said Safi. "I will walk back with you towards St. Amand, and relate you his adventures."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Now happy he whose cloak and cincture can
Hold out this tempest."

Shakspeare. King John.

WHILE the rough winds of November were battling loudly with the limbs and trunks of the trees in the adjacent hunting grounds, some bright logs were blazing on the drawing-room hearth of the chateau of St. Amand. Roland Elsmere, and Harriet with her sister, formed a semi-circle round the genial flame, and the thoughtless little ones, Cyril and Agnes,

were playing, in ecstasies of delight, with some new toys which their father had just brought from Paris.

“Thank God!” said Harriet, “the worst struggle is now over.”

“Perhaps,” said Roland, in a rather desponding tone.

“And why ‘perhaps,’ dearest Roland, since your final departure from your last abode is now an assured fact?”

“It is a declaration of war, not a conclusion of peace. I have retreated, and thrown myself into a fortress; but I must prepare for defence. A vigorous siege and violent assault are certain to ensue.”

“What can the besieger do, dearest? Have you not right on your side?”

“Right, my own Harriet, but not law, and from Catherine I have nothing but law to expect. She has left Paris for two days, and is gone to Tours to visit a friend who is very ill. On her return, she will find a letter explaining to her most fully my views and feelings on the

subject of my marriage with her; but I know beforehand how useless my epistle will be as far as she is concerned, and that the more closely it is reasoned, the more will she be exasperated against me, and determined to maintain her claims. She can bring an action against me in an ecclesiastical court for a restoration of conjugal rights. The judge can issue an order in compliance with her application, and if I refuse or neglect to comply with it, I can be imprisoned for contempt of court. I propose, therefore, to write to my attorney, and desire him to effect, as soon as possible, the sale of all my property in England. Flosdale will be knocked down to the highest bidder, and the sweet scenes of our first love will pass into the hands of strangers. The velvet slope of the lawn will be as soft and green as ever, and the sheet of crystal water will shine as clear as when we peopled it with golden fish, but the freshness, and the calm, and the luxury, and translucent brilliancy of early nuptial enjoyments, once lost, can never be more than partially regained."

"But why, dearest Roland, make such sad reflections. There are always two sides to every question. Advancing years may, and very often do, bring with them blessings and enjoyments unknown to early youth. We, moreover, are still young, and young enough, I would hope, to begin life anew. But what do you mean to do while your affairs are being arranged?"

"We must depart hence, Harriet, with as little delay as possible. We had better, I think, proceed to Havre, and thence, or from Southhampton, take ship for the United States."

"May the God of Columbus guide us!" exclaimed Harriet; "may His gracious blessing rest upon the bark that bears us, and the seas that roll us, and the winds that waft us to the shores of hope. How many millions, whom the Old World has driven out, have found in the New World more than compensated for their sorrow and loss!"

"There is no New World, Harriet. The

world is old everywhere, old, and corrupt, decrepid, and bitter.

*"Coelum, non animum, mutant, qui trans mare currunt,"**

as Horace says. Change of place will not alter a man's destiny, if he is doomed to misfortune, variation of climate will only turn over fresh pages in the sinister book of his fate."

"Alas! dearest Roland, what is fate? The work of our own hands. The clay of which we are the potter. The harvest, of the seeds we have sown. Do not be desponding. We have not lost all our power over the future. We may strive, at the least, to avert evil from our offspring, however little earthly good we may attain for ourselves."

"And what will dear Lizzy do," asked Roland, "if we take this far voyage?"

"Wherever Harriet goes, I will go," replied Lizzy, "so long as her weak health, or any other circumstances, make my residence with her, or near her, necessary or desirable."

* Epist. lib i. Ep. 11.

“Would you let the Atlantic roll between you and Safi?”

Lizzy smiled sweetly, and said :

“Perhaps the Atlantic would not prove an impassible or permanent barrier between us.”

Roland and Harriet retired to rest at an early hour, but it was not long before their slumbers were disturbed.

“Did you hear that noise, Harriet ?” ask’d Roland “What is it?”

“Rats,” replied Harriet, only half roused.

“Listen again dear. I don’t think it is made by rats.”

“It must be rats, dearest Roland. They abound in this old chateau.”

“But I see several cats in the house, who enact policemen toward these omnivorous thieves.”

“True, dearest; but you know that they multiply so fast, that unless they were given to devouring each other, no traps, or arsenic, or prowling cats, would be able to keep them down. Besides, the old Baron *will* store his corn close

to the dwelling house, and that attracts the horrid little beasts. Many a night have they kept me awake."

"There it is again, Harriet! And it sounds to me much more like a biped than a quadruped, especially those wretched weeny mammifers that you are talking about."

"Is it Ramono?"

"Certainly not. Half a dozen Ramonos would not make such a stir."

Harriet now began to be really alarmed, remembering the mysterious attempt which had been made to assassinate her husband, on the night of their arrival at St. Amand. She followed his example, therefore, by enveloping herself in a dressing gown, seizing a light, and examining the corridor, and staircase, and every cupboard and corner of their sleeping and dressing rooms. The search was for some time quite fruitless, but at last their attention was attracted, by a recurrence of the noise, to a chink in the deep oaken wainscoting which

lined the walls of the room on all sides. Inserting the nail of his forefinger in the crevice, Roland was surprised to find that it yielded to the touch and widened easily. With a gentle push the curiously-carved panel slid back, and disclosed a spacious recess, such as might serve for lumber, or firewood, or for personal concealment in a perilous hour. Roland lost not a moment in thrusting a light into this suspicious hole, so as to explore its dimension and contents. At one extremity he perceived a female form, thickly veiled, shrinking into the smallest possible space, and trembling from head to foot.

“Wretched woman!” said Roland, “come out of this den.”

The figure moved, paused for an instant on all fours, and then, like an awkward quadruped, made a spring towards the aperture, with a view of passing between Mr. and Mrs. Elsmere, and making her escape. The movement, though desperately vehement, completely failed. The unfortunate eaves-dropper was caught, like a ram

in a thicket, in the extended arms of Roland and Harriet. Her veil, which none but herself had raised for nearly fifty years, was forced back, and never did torch, lamp, candle, moon or star shine on a face more hideous and revolting than that which it revealed.

Deformity in woman is especially repulsive, because she is the most exquisite and lovely of Nature's works. The visage of Mademoiselle Cyr—for she it was who had been prompted by vicious curiosity to secrete herself in the Elsmere's chamber—was almost too monstrous to be described. The eyes were unnaturally small, and the upper and lower jaws were so frightfully elongated that her face bore a strong and painful resemblance to that of a swine. It was covered, moreover, with a thick down, which rendered it still more unlike the "human face divine" than it otherwise would have been, and likened it in a singular manner "unto the beasts that perish."

An apparition so strange, so shocking, and so

sudden produced a terrible effect on Harriet's nerves. It is true she had seen the unhappy listener before, but she had not then penetrated the appalling mystery of her veil. No sooner had a glare of light fallen on that so sadly disproportioned facial angle, than Harriet screamed, and swooned with fright. Her enfeebled frame could ill bear any rude and abrupt shock, suffering, as it still was, from the effects of Walter Dunraven's recent extraordinary intrusion upon her in the adjacent woods.

Roland felt too much pity and contempt for his prisoner to allow him to wreak any vengeance on her, or meditate any penalty. He suffered her to escape through the half open door, and turned all his attention to his pale and prostrate wife. Her scream had aroused her sister and her maid, who ran in breathless alarm, to know what evil had happened. Roland soon left Harriet to their offices, and wrung his hands with grief. His was not that robust and athletic mind, which, in new trials and troubles, acquires new powers,

and triumphs over all obstacles by force of an indomitable will. *He* could not make circumstances: circumstances made, or rather unmade, him.

Lizzy lost no time in endeavouring to encourage his drooping strength and wavering resolution, which caused her even deeper solicitude than her sister's shaken nerves. But it became more and more difficult to reason with Roland. At one moment he seemed to acquiesce, and in the next he wandered off again into melancholy and desponding reflections.

"The heavens above me," he said, "are brass and iron. I row hard against the stream, but it is too strong for me; my acts are like the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus, which sprang up forthwith in the shape of armed foes. My path is hedged round with thorns: if I go to the right, I am pierced, if to the left, I bleed; if I move forward, I am entangled; if backward, I am torn."

"Courage! my dear brother," said Lizzy, "courage and hope! There are some lines in

Dante with which I would most earnestly exhort you :

‘Non aver tema :

Fatti sicur, chè noi siamo a buon punto :

Non stringer, ma rallarga ogni vigore.’*

“*Buon punto !*” replied Roland. “Do you call this *buon punto*, dear Lizzy? Who can tell what may be the results of this fright? You know how sensitive Harriet is.”

“I know it too well,” said Lizzy; “but I hope that by to-morrow she will be recovered. Every evil has its attendant good. What has now occurred will supply us with an excuse which would otherwise have been wanting, for our departure from St. Amand immediately, and in the greatest haste. Of course you could not stay here a day longer, to be exposed to a repetition of such disastrous intrusions.”

The Baronne de Barrère was irritated beyond measure the next morning by the announcement of the Elsmeres’ intention to leave the chateau without delay. Her natural French volubility

* Il Purgatorio, ix. 46.

received an additional stimulus from the nettled state of her inward woman, and the prospect of an awkward crisis in the state of her husband's finances. Both Monsieur de Barrère and herself, she said, were overwhelmed with astonishment at the communication they had received—they did not know how these things were done in England, but in France nobody acted in this way—it was altogether a violation of an engagement—it was a lesson by which they hoped to profit—they would act very differently in future under similar circumstances—they would take care and guarantee themselves against the chance of such unprincipled caprice—they could not have conceived it possible that Mr. and Mrs. Elsmere could have been guilty of such an action—of course they regretted extremely the little accident which had caused Mrs. Elsmere so much alarm—to assign that, however, as a reason for quitting St. Amand with precipitation was perfectly preposterous—poor Mademoiselle Cyr was an object of pure commiseration—it was not correct to affirm that she had secreted herself be-

hind the panelling in order to listen—she had wandered into the chamber to amuse herself by looking out of one of the windows [she was very fond of gazing at the stars], but on hearing the sound of approaching footsteps, at an earlier hour than she had expected, she had, poor thing, imprudently hidden herself through fear—Mr. and Mrs. Elsmere's sudden resolution to depart was likely to produce an unfavourable impression in the neighbourhood—this, indeed, was the only reason the Baron and herself were annoyed by their hasty, and, after all, unaccountable decision—in other respects, they would be rejoiced to have the chateau again entirely to themselves—they were not so sordid as to be influenced by pecuniary considerations—they were far above that—in fact, it was the very last thing they thought of; they had let a part of the chateau, and put themselves to great inconvenience, entirely for Mr. and Mrs. Elsmere's accommodation; and this was the return they met with—they believed the proceeding to be as illegal as it was extraordinary—the Baron would write to

his *homme d'affaires* on the subject immediately—in the meanwhile they did not doubt that, if they applied to the proper authorities, they could prevent the intended decampment—they did not, however consider it worth their while to avail themselves of the provisions of the law, nor, indeed, should they give themselves any further trouble about such unworthy conduct—*il fallait être Anglais pour faire de pareilles choses !*"

Notwithstanding Roland's perplexity and trouble, he was quite equal to the task of coping with Madame de Barrère's captious temper and caustic tongue. He knew a little both of human and of French nature. He remembered the cake, perfumed and sweetened with honey,* which Æneas flung to the hungry dog, Cerberus, when he visited the realms of Pluto, and he judged wisely that, after the like fashion, he should best propitiate the old Baroness by handing her that liberal pecuniary compensation after which she was so evidently

* Virg. *Æneid.* vi. 420.

hankering. The sop succeeded so well, that, when the Elsmere carriages drove through the chateau gates, the family party received from Monsieur and Madame de Barrère a bland insincerity in the shape of a smile, and the somewhat begrudged civility of a "*bon voyage*."

CHAPTER XXV.

"I do remember an apothecary,—
And hereabouts he dwells,—whom late I noted,
. . . . With overwhelming brows,
Culling of simples."

Shakspeare. Romeo and Juliet.

OUR readers must not suppose that Catherine Elsmere was ignorant of the events which were transpiring at St. Amand. She had spies in every direction. Though she had, just before Roland's departure, left Paris for a day or two, she was regularly informed of his proceedings by post and by telegraph. She had taken into her confidence an English lawyer residing in

Paris, whose name was Scruples. He was probably so-called by a euphemism such as that which led the Greeks to call the Furies Eumenides, or like *lucus* (if the etymology be not fabulous,) *a non lucendo*. Under his guidance, and in pursuance also of Lord Oxenham's counsels, she had studiously suppressed all animadversions on Roland's frequent absence. She never reproached him for his visits to Harriet, though she was fully aware of them, and she never complained of his total estrangement from her, and habitual coldness. She received his civilities with the air of one who, though injured, was still friendly, and she waited patiently for the moment, which she knew must shortly arrive, when he would openly desert her, and take up his abode at St. Amand, or elope with Harriet to some more distant retreat. She had also retained in her special service and pay the valet, Eugène, whom Roland had felt it necessary to discard before leaving Paris, and had sent him immediately to the little town of Cadore, about a league from the chateau of the Baron de Barrère. Here he was to collect

information respecting Roland's movements, and to transmit prompt and accurate reports to his vigilant mistress. He had established his headquarters at the inn which had once boasted the sign of the *Fleur de Lis*, but had now substituted that of the *Aigle Impérial*. His principal rendezvous, however, was the shop of a hump-backed apothecary, who passed among irreverent men, by the name of *Le Petit Bossu*. This rustic Galen was quite an original in his way. He was entirely self-educated, yet, aided by natural quickness of understanding, he had succeeded in acquiring knowledge enough to make him the wonder of many villages. He had a very tolerable smattering of Latin, and might, by some persons, have been regarded as a Latin scholar, if he had not entertained a supreme indifference for the niceties of syntax, and distinctions of gender, case, and tense. From the study of herbs, and simples, acids, and alkalis, he had passed on to the art of healing, and the anatomy and physiology of the human frame, exhibited in plates, and explained in old and exploded treatises. He

knew the names of most of the bones, from the *os occipitis* to the *os coccygis*; he could define, with more or less accuracy, the difference between tendons and cartilages, veins, and arteries, bile-ducts, and gall-bladders, and had formed a theory of his own respecting the disputed functions of the spleen. His physiological researches had brought him to the sage conclusion, that "we are fearfully and wonderfully made,"—a thesis on which he was wont to dilate in language equally philosophical and trite. He took a peculiar pleasure in over-stepping the legal bounds of his calling, which was that of a *Pharmacien*, by treating the many sick folk who came to him for advice; and partly owing to his own abilities, partly in consequence of the ignorance of the regular practitioners round about, his treatment in general was certainly more successful than that of any *Æsculapius* in the neighbourhood. Hence it was no wonder that he felt an especial indignation against Voltaire for having dared to affirm, with his usual profanity, that the art of doctors consists in putting medicines of which

they know little, into bodies of which they know less.

But the *Petit Bossu* of Cadore had not only distinguished himself by his learning and address in the hippocratic art, he had also dabbled in the deeper waters of theology. It is probable that he had never read any book of divinity through, except his catechism; but he had a Bible, a Missal, and the decrees of the council of Trent, to all of which he was very fond of referring to clear up any point which happened to be discussed in his presence. He knew something of most of the saints in the Calendar, had a good notion of the great Investiture quarrel, and prided himself particularly on being able to specify the heresies pointed at in the Athanasian creed, and the difference between Monophysites and Monothelites. Being zealous for Holy Church, he was in high odour with all the *Curés* and *Vicaires* in the *Arrondissements*, and few of them ever passed through Cadore without dropping in at the Pharmacy to say *bon jour* to the little hunch-back, and offer or accept a pinch of

snuff. Sometimes the *Petit Bossu* regaled them with the half of a bad peppermint-drop ; but if the visitor had been long absent, or chanced to be a *Chanoine* or other dignitary, he was frequently known to open a bottle of Bordeaux or Madoc.

Le Petit Bossu had a different price for every drug, in proportion to the means of the purchaser. Thus, in his pharmacy, a dose of *Thridace*, or a handful of herbs for *tisane*, when sold to a marquis, cost at least ten times as much as the same article dispensed to a boor. But if he had an eye to his own interest in taxing heavily the purses of the rich, he was also—to his credit be it recorded—charitably lenient towards the pockets of the poor. Many were the needy persons, who, having seen better days, blessed the name of the *Petit Bossu* for supplying them gratuitously, through long ailments, with every medicine they required.

Being always jovial, and having always something smart and humourous to say, and being always *au courant* in the affairs of the day, and well up in the latest news, his shop was the

favourite resort of all the gossips in the town and neighbourhood. Eugène, in particular, found it an invaluable resort for his purpose, and propitiated the little chymist with a constant supply of choice *cigarettes*. The chateau of St. Amand, its new inmates, and the never yet penetrated mystery of the veil, were frequent and fruitful themes of conversation in the *réunions* of the Pharmacy of Cadore.

One morning, soon after his arrival in the town, Eugène entered to take his accustomed lounge, and found an unusual gathering of the notables of the place. The *Maire*, the doctor, the surgeon, the *Avoué*, the *Notaire*, two *Marguilliers*, a priest, and the *Petit Bossu* were in close and earnest confabulation. Eugène supposed, at first, that, at the least, the Emperor had declared war with England, or renewed hostilities with Austria, but he soon discovered that the matter in question much more closely concerned himself and his mistress.

“How did you hear of it, Monsieur le Pharmacien?” asked the *Maire*.

"One of the stable boys from the chateau," replied the *Petit Bossu*, "came here about half an hour ago. He could scarcely speak for excitement, and looked as if one of the Furies had been chasing him all the way. He brought a prescription which the physician had just written for Madame Elsmere, the English lady. I believe he had been running so fast, quite as much from eagerness to communicate his news, as from desire to procure the medicine as soon as possible. Here is the *ordonnance*."

The Pharmacien then read aloud the following prescription written, as it was, in a jumble of French and Latin :

"R. Extrait de Laitue gr. xvij.

Sulfate de Quinine gr. vj.

Camphre gr. iij.

M. Fiat six pilules. Sumat une ter die.

(Signée) LUC BOMBAARD, Docteur en Medecine."

"Tonic and calming," said the merry-faced apothecary. "Her nerves must well require that at least, after such a shock. What a guest in a bed-chamber! What a phantom of the night!

What a visage! A swine's snout upon human shoulders! Why it must have been as bad as seeing the Cyclops in Sicily, with one eye in the centre of their forehead, or the Gorgon Medusa, with her head and hair all snakes, which turned the beholders into stone!"

Here the "*petit farceur*," as some of his neighbours were used to call the apothecary, rubbed his hands together, probably with inward complacency at the aptness of his classical allusions.

"I suppose," said the Notary, "the next thing we shall hear will be that Monsieur and Madame Elsmere are going to quit the chateau."

"No doubt," replied *Le Petit Bossu*; "unless Monsieur le Baron should send away Mademoiselle Cyr, which he is hardly likely to do, now that she has been at St. Amand so long, especially if she is, as many believe, his own daughter, not altogether "*sine labe concepta*."*

At these words and somewhat singular quotation from a litany, the priest shrugged his

* Conceived without sin.

shoulders, the mayor opened his eyes as wide as if he had never heard the rumour before, the notary protruded his tongue, the Avoué screwed his mouth and jaws on one side. The doctor grinned, the surgeon whistled into his own larynx, and the two churchwardens respectively inflated their fat cheeks in profound and solemn silence. Eugène was too well versed in the important duties of a spy, to show signs of any particular interest in the case under discussion.

“The stable boy from the chateau,” continued the little hunch-back, “declares that when Mademoiselle Cyr was compelled to come forth from her hiding place, two streams of fire issued from her nostrils, her breath smelt like brimstone, her ears stood erect like a donkey’s, and her face and neck were covered with hair as thick and shaggy as a she bear’s! But these I regard as mere colourings—exaggerations by which vulgar minds often render incredible things that are, in themselves, already sufficiently strange. But here is another servant

from the Chateau, who will no doubt, bring some fresh intelligence."

The new comer was the Elsmers' footman. He had been charged to call at the Pharmacy, and obtain, if possible, some English cordials and nostrums, of which he presented a list.

"And how is Madame Elsmere now, Monsieur Jules?" asked the grotesque and slipshod apothecary, as he received the paper. "Every one here is concerned for her. She seems such an amiable lady, she, and her sister too. Ornaments to any land! How are they, Monsieur Jules?"

"Madame Elsmere is better now, Monsieur le Pharmacien," replied the footman; "and the doctor thinks she will be quite well enough to leave to-morrow."

"So soon, Monsieur Jules? What a loss for St. Amand! The very flowers in the park will droop for her absence."

"Anyhow," said Jules, "our departure is fixed. Madame la Baronne is as furious as a wild cat; but Monsieur le Baron, they say, is

very sorrowful, and sits by the hearth in his arm-chair, staring at the embers, and won't move or speak one word to any one. All they can do, however, will not keep us now in that dismal old house. I am come over to Cadore to order conveyances and post-horses for to-morrow morning, and my master has written to the hotel de New York, at Havre, to secure apartments for the family to-morrow night."

Eugène had no sooner heard this momentous piece of news, than he wished the *pharmacien* good morning, and hastened to communicate what he had heard to Mrs. Catherine Elsmere, by means of that wonderful machine which triumphs over time and distance, and promises ere long to girdle the earth with a thought.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“ Has the shock so rudely given
Confused me, like the unhappy bark

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,
And staggers blindly ere she sink,
And stunned me from my power to think,
And all my knowledge of myself,

And made me that delirious man
Whose fancy fuses old and new,
And flashes into false and true,
And mingles all without a plan ?”

Tennyson's In Memoriam.

THE travellers arrived at Rouen, on their way to Havre, without any mishap. At every station which they had passed since leaving

Paris, some portion of their burden seemed to drop, and new gleams and glimpses of future happiness broke the darkness of the horizon. Already they imagined themselves to have sailed unharmed through the dangers of the deep, and to be shooting into some spice-breathing and palmy port in the far west. Already they fancied that they were planting their footsteps on the shores of freedom, and singing hymns of praise and gladness, like Miriam and the maidens of Israel escaped from the land of bondage, and Pharoah's pursuing host.

Of the three travellers, Lizzy was the most hopeful and sanguine, partly owing to the natural elasticity of her spirits, and, still more, because she had drunk less deeply of the cup of human sorrow. Of personal suffering she was almost ignorant; she had been afflicted chiefly in the affliction of others.

The hopes in which Harriet indulged, though they were decidedly on the increase, were somewhat enfeebled by the violent concussion which her entire system had received by her recent

fright and consternation in the gloomy chateau. Her husband hoped also, but his fears fought against his hopes; the battle between them was sharp, and victory leaned sometimes to one side and sometimes to the other. In his desponding moments black melancholy fell upon his spirit, like a pall; the proud form of the avenging Catherine alone appeared, like a remorseless fury, amid the darkness, and all time and space was filled by one omnipotent Adversary, employed in planning and working his utter misery and ruin.

Unfortunately, many of Roland's apprehensions were too well grounded. Catherine was all he feared, and more; and there were, in regard to himself, designs in the bosom of retributive Providence, which had still to be evolved. Roland and the two sisters had quitted the refreshment room, and taken their seats again in the railway carriage, and knew not that ever since their arrival they had been watched from an inner apartment. They had seen the chil-

dren, with their nurse safe in another *voiture*, and had just settled themselves with their backs to the engine, and the last bell had rung, when three other travellers stepped in, and took the opposite *fauteuils*, and the train started.

It was Catherine Elsmere, herself, and with her, Scruples and his wife. Harriet and Lizzy had never seen either of them before, and therefore merely felt vexed at the presence of strangers.

Catherine had entered first, and taken the vacant place immediately in front of Roland. Her face was like a thunder-cloud. Wounded pride and implacable anger were written on her forehead in dark and distinct characters. Her lips were firmly closed, and indicated an inflexible resolution. She uttered not a word.

Roland was perfectly aghast at this fatal apparition. It realized all his fears, and sounded the death-knell of all his reviving hopes. He threw himself back in the carriage, closed his eyes, and groaned deeply. The sisters looked at him with the tenderest concern, but they did

not, as yet, know the cause of his increased emotion.

Scruples was the first to break silence, and he addressed himself directly to Harriet.

"You do not know me, Madam," he said, "but I know you. Allow me to tell you that this lady," pointing to Catherine, "is Mrs. Elsmere, and this other lady is Mrs. Scruples, my wife. I am here, Madam, as a representative of English law, and as the legal adviser of my respected client, Mrs. Elsmere."

Half delirious with embarrassment and vexation, Roland rose, with his hand on the strap of the window, intending, if possible, to call to the guard, and remove to another carriage.

Catherine was quite prepared to counteract this movement. She arose also, seized Roland by the collar, thrust him violently back in his seat, and, in an imperious tone, said, "Sit still, Sir. You will try in vain to escape. Do not assume the air of a persecuted man. It is you who are the injurer. Proceed, if you please, Mr. Scruples."

"It is my duty to inform you, Madam," continued Scruples, still addressing Harriet, "that the act in which Mr. Elsmere is now engaged is a flagrant violation of the law of England, and that you are incurring a heavy responsibility by abetting and encouraging it. It will lead inevitably to his being prosecuted, and compelled to abandoned the course he is pursuing, under pain of imprisonment. You have, no doubt, bouyed yourself up with the hope of evading pursuit and detection by embarking at Havre for some other country; but I would advise you to disabuse yourself without delay of any such delusive idea. Mrs. Elsmere is determined not to be dishonoured, or abandoned with impunity. I am entirely devoted to her service and interests, and I will allow no calls, either of business or pleasure, to interfere with the execution of her plans. We shall never lose you from our sight."

"Never!" echoed Catherine.

Harriet trembled inwardly, for her frame was enfeebled, but she deeply felt the necessity of summoning all her energies to meet the present

crisis. She knew that the ground she was now taking was right and moral, and this conviction gave her strength.

"I am quite as determined, Mr. Scruples," she said, "as you or your client. I will perish rather than be torn from my husband."

"Whom do you call your husband?" asked Catherine in bitter scorn.

"Roland Elsmere is my husband, Miss Dash-ton," replied Harriet, "and never, while I live, can be the husband of another."

"Insolent and calumnious woman!" exclaimed Catherine. "How dare you have the brazen-faced effrontory to call me 'Miss Dashton?'"

"I did not intend or wish to insult you," said Harriet, "but merely to express my belief that you have rightly no other name."

"What intense audacity!" rejoined Harriet's indignant rival. "AH England—all Europe—recognises me as Mrs. Elsmere."

"Not *all* England," retorted Harriet, "nor all Europe either,—far from it, very far."

"Infamous libeller!" exclaimed Catherine, half choked with rage. "The *Law* of all England pronounces me to be the lawful wife of him whom you blush not to call your husband."

"The law of England," said Harriet, "may be on your side. But what does that prove? Human laws have often made evil good, and good evil. By the law of *God* marriage is indissoluble."

Here Catherine burst forth upon her rival with a torrent of bitter reproach.

"You canting hypocrite!" she cried. "It is not for *you* to talk of good and evil, and the laws of God. What law have you followed but the law of the lawless—sensuality and self? You had a good and kind husband, who reposed all his confidence in you: you rewarded him with perfidy, infidelity and desertion. You had young and innocent children: you abandoned them as no tigress would forsake her cubs. You had a home: you fled from it. You had friends: you lost them all. You had a country: you expatriated yourself, because your country frowned

upon your vice. You threw yourself into the embraces of an infamous traitor—a snake in the grass—your husband's *friend*! You outraged every law human and divine. Propriety and modesty you trampled under foot. You defied public opinion. You stifled the voice of conscience. You mocked at justice and judgment. You disported yourself with meretricious wantonness. You contaminated all you touched. You caused scandal whithersoever you went, and spread pestilence wherever you dwelt. You pierced your husband's soul with anguish; you made him prematurely a widower, and your children motherless. You brought dishonour on your family, and infamy on your name. You have ruined yourself, and now, if you could, you would ruin me."

"Rather," interrupted Harriet, "if I could, I would save you."

"Save me! And from what? What do you mean, woman?"

"I would save you from being yourself that which you justly reprobate in another. I would

save you from legalized sin. You knew that Roland was married; you knew that I was his wife."

"Audacious culprit! It is you who are the sinner; and yours *should be* the shame. I did *not* know that Roland was married. I did *not* know that you were his wife. I knew exactly the reverse. I knew that Roland had obtained a divorce from you. Any man of honour and dignity would have done the like. He appealed to his country, and his country did him justice. Your marriage with him was dissolved, and made to be as though it had never been. When he married me you were nothing to him, absolutely nothing. You were no more to him than the dust he had shaken from his cloak, the dirt he had scraped from his shoes. Resign these idle and preposterous pretensions. Go, and hide yourself in some corner of the earth. Take your children with you, if Roland can entrust them with such a mother. Give to God the Devil's leavings, if you will; but mumble your prayers in retirement, and never again attempt

to intrude between me and my lawful husband, for as surely as there are thunderbolts in the arsenals of Justice, so surely shall they fall on your head in vengeance and heavy retribution. When you can silence the winds, melt the mountains, and stem the tide of the ocean, you may have some hope of breaking and frustrating the will and purpose of Catherine Elsmere."

"What a pity she was not brought up to the bar!" thought Scruples. "How she has pitched into that woman?"

Catherine's invectives had indeed fallen upon Harriet like hail-stones among Alpine hills. Her words had poured forth like a cataract, rapid, vehement, and fearfully effective. If the charges she brought against her adversary had been altogether groundless, they would have been comparatively easy to bear. Unhappily it was truth that feathered the shafts, and poisoned their points. Lizzy's heart was lacerated with sympathetic grief, and while her downcast eyes shed bitter tears, she had warmly pressed her sister's hand, as if to reassure her of her

unalterable affection, whatever trials might ensue.

As to Harriet herself, it must be confessed that she quailed beneath the impetuous and powerful assault of her proud rival. She was conscious, however, of sincere repentance, though not of innocence, and she sought by secret ejaculations for support and courage from that God who has promised to be at all times, the strength and consolation of the penitent.

It was evident to Scruples that victory was on his client's side. He saw Lizzy in tears, Harriet disconcerted, pale and sad; while Roland's countenance indicated little less than total aberration. The moment was not to be lost. Catherine's successes must be followed up vigorously. The enemy's lines were wavering, and would very soon be perfectly routed.

"In a contest like the present," he said, addressing Harriet, "there is nothing more important than to distinguish between what belongs to the subject and what is really foreign

to it. Now the question at issue between yourself and Mrs. Elsmere is wholly independent of any of those religious considerations on which you seem to lay so much stress. It has nothing whatever to do with the law of nature, the law of conscience, or the law of God. It has no more to do with God than with Buddha, with the Bible, than with the Koran. It resolves itself simply into this—What says the law of England? Have you by that law any claim to be regarded as Mr. Elsmere's wife? Now in the 49th clause of the Bill entitled 'An Act to amend'—merely to *amend*, observe, not to *alter* in any essential points—'the law relating to Divorce and Matrimonial Causes in England,' passed in the year 1857, liberty to re-marry is expressly given to the divorced parties, '*as if the prior marriage had been dissolved by death.*' In the eye of the law, therefore, you are dead as regards Mr. Elsmere, and he is legally no more to you than the dust and bones in a coffin.

"Unless you can persuade the Queen, Lords,

and Commons of Great Britain, to reverse their decree, and to make their abolition of this law retrospective, as well as prospective, you have not the slenderest shadow of a chance of ever making good your singular and most unreasonable claim.

“Desist, madam, at once and for ever from this fruitless attempt, which can only increase your troubles. Your conduct, if persisted in, will excite universal reprehension. No one, now-a-days, a few Puseyites and Irvingites excepted, has the slightest sympathy with these straight-laced notions about marriage being indissoluble. All the Protestant churches, and all sound Protestants repudiate them. I do not profess to be expert in dove-tailing texts of Scripture where they agree, and making them square and straight when they differ, but I know that all our best Biblicists have sifted this matter thoroughly, and consider two passages in Matthew* quite clear and conclusive on the lawfulness of a man’s re-marrying, when divorced

* He alludes to St. Matthew v. 32, and xix. 8, 9.

from his wife under certain circumstances. When the Bill, to which I have referred was passing through the House of Peers, Lord Chief Justice Campbell denounced, as no better than quibbling any argument in contravention of his position that the Bible allows divorce and re-marriage; and the Duke of Argyll, then Postmaster General, observed, that, though in a difficult question we might do well to invoke theological aid, yet the sense of the Divine word was so clear on this head as to make it wholly superfluous.* The opposition offered to this Bill of Divorce was very feeble, for all the tendencies of our age are, as I think they should be, towards liberty of conscience and freedom of action. Seldom has a law been more popular, and so far from its operation being curtailed by any future enactments, there is vastly more reason to expect that it will be considerably extended."

While Scruples was thus haranguing, and during the conversation recorded in this chap-

* *Times* of May 20, 1857.

ter, Roland Elsnere's understanding, assailed by difficulties too complicated; and miseries too inevitable, was reeling and tottering from its throne. The hallucinations, already particularised, with which he had for some time past been tormented, had now become fixed and dominant ideas. Providence was his enemy; fate his master and tyrant; he—the helpless victim of both. Continuity of thought on any subject was altogether impossible. If any tide of reflection set in for a moment, it was immediately turned by counter-tides and under-currents. Past, Present, and Future, Time and Eternity had, to his apprehension, no longer any distinctive meaning, but were fused in one dismal and oppressive idea of miserable and isolated existence. Chronology and topography were obliterated from his mind; all times, seasons, and epochs were an everlasting and unchangeable present; all places and space were a dreary blank, and boundless desert. At one moment he was inwardly carried away by a frenzy of maniac rage, and in the next he was melting

into more than feminine tenderness. The reins of the will had no power over his rampant thoughts, and these ever and anon rushed forward to the madman's refuge—Suicide, and as often recoiled before the ghastly goal.

It would be impossible to describe the lunatic phases through which, in rapid succession, his spirit passed. Some order and distinctness is required in any subject, in order that it may be described, but the wanderings of an alienated mind, which are dim, incongruous, and chaotic, baffle all the powers of description, whether in prose or verse.

The train stopped at the Havre station while Scruples was still speaking; the carriage door flew open, and the travellers stepped out.

“Now, Mr. Elsmere,” said Scruples, “take my arm.”

Roland was perfectly bewildered, and had quite forgotten the object of his journey. With an instinct superior to reason, he flung his arms round Harriet's neck, and embraced her tenderly, and then—who can be surprised after what has

been narrated of him?—quietly and tamely took the proffered arm.

“ See that Mr. Elsmere’s luggage is separated, and brought to our hotel,” said Catherine to the footman who waited on the platform to receive her orders. Then, side by side with Mrs. Scruples, she followed the gentlemen, and they all disappeared.

The proud and unbending Catherine had gained her point. She retained her husband, but—his reason was gone. Harriet was left with her faithful sister, pale, dizzy, sick, and—broken-hearted.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Oh! but they say the tongues of dying men,
Enforce attention, like deep harmony :
Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain ;
For they breathe truth, that breathe their words in pain."
Shakspeare's King Richard II.

THE decline of Harriet's health was rapidly precipitated by the unhappy events recorded in the last chapter. She faded away like a fair plant smitten by untimely blight, and it became daily more evident that all hope of her recovery was vain. Her loving sister watched by her couch with unremitting attention, and was, indeed, her only earthly consolation. Again and again she

besought Lizzy to take charge of her motherless children when she should have departed from this life, and received from her reiterated assurance, that they should be to her as if they were her own.

“Let them be taught, dearest Lizzy,” she would say, “whatever is suited to their station and their times; but, far above all other things, let them learn by your precepts, as they will be sure to gather from your example, that happiness and virtue are one, that they are as inseparable as light and heat, and are, indeed, but two ways of expressing the self-same things; for, to be virtuous is to be happy under whatever trials, and to be truly happy is to be truly good. Teach them that misery and ruin are the inevitable consequences of sin, and that no affliction is so heavy and irksome as a conscience defiled. The nearer I approach the grave, the less do I shrink from it. My mind now dwells with singular complacency on the thought of death. Let him cut me down, for I cumber the ground. I have forfeited my place in society, and can never regain

it. Without a hope of re-union with Roland, I should be an obstacle, rather than a help, to the welfare and happiness of my children and you. When I am gone, the exciting cause of his derangement will be removed, the boiling ferment of his spirit will subside, and he will be able, without the distraction of any other tie, and without any qualms of conscience, to reconcile himself to his union with her who can never while I live be his lawful wife. God is just, Lizzy; God is severe; but He is merciful also. We turn His good into evil, but out of our evil He is ever producing good."

The *Italianissimo* was too deeply enamoured of Lizzy to remain long at a distance from her. He had heard by letter of the disastrous failure of Harriet's scheme, but he continued faithful to her to whom he had once and for ever pledged his troth. Often he would sit by Harriet's couch of pain, and vied with Lizzy in smoothing her rough passage to the tomb.

"Scipio," she said to him one day when her

end was drawing very nigh, "you will perhaps be surprised, but, I hope, not pained to hear what I am going to say. Now that my days are fast declining, I see many, many things in a totally different light from that in which they formerly appeared. Our moral sense, which life, health, and prosperity are so apt to becloud and pervert, becomes clearer, I believe, in proportion as we advance nearer to the portals of Death and Judgment. I cannot help thinking now that the wound which you received under your right eye at Pisa, however deeply you lament it, has been to you a boon and blessing from the giver of all good."

"No doubt it has, in one way," replied Safi, "since it has led indirectly to my meeting with Lizzy, who will, I hope and believe, be the great boon and blessing of my existence."

"That may be true also, Scipio," said Harriet, "but it is not what I was thinking of. I regard your wound as a blessing, because it has prevented your serving in arms in Italy:"

"And helping to free my country from the

galling yoke of the stranger, and the oppressor's iron rule?"

"Yes, Scipio, I do believe that an unseen hand has in mercy withheld you from the battle field. I do not enter into the question of the independence of Italy, to which I am unequal, but merely observe that the life of a rebel, even though a patriot, is singularly dangerous to the soul. The habit of mind which it fosters is diametrically opposed to that spirit of submission, obedience, loyalty, and humility, which a Christian ought especially to cherish. Have patience with me, Scipio, while I thus speak. If I did not feel myself dying, I should not dare to moralize. The life of a rebel is conversant with plots, bloodshed, massacre, plunder, and devastation: do these things form an atmosphere favourable to the spiritual life? If you had served in arms for Italy, you would of necessity have been associated with men, at the extravagance of whose opinions, the violence of whose language, the unscrupulousness of whose conduct, even you—patriot and liberal as you are—would be horrified;

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men, who, like your infidel acquaintance of Pisa, would make a mock of your religion; men who seek, not rational liberty, but unbounded license; who despise all authority and all creeds; whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness, and whose feet are swift to shed blood. Would not the constant society of such persons be likely to endanger your eternal interests? What, if you had reaped worldly glory, and forfeited heavenly? What, if you had won earthly laurels, and lost the crown of righteousness which God has promised to them that love Him? No! Scipio, you are to be congratulated, heartily and affectionately congratulated, on God having chosen for you a career quite different from that which you had chosen for yourself. He has marked you, I trust, for His own; and his mark is generally affliction.

“ The path of sorrows, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrows are unknown;
No traveller ever reached that blest abode,
Who found not thorns and briars on his road.”

Your present quiet and unexciting course is far

more likely to lead you safe to that rest which remaineth for the people of God, than the tumultuous and passionate path of insurrection whether fruitless or successful."

Harriet sank back exhausted by her own energy. When she was a little recovered, Safi said:

"These reflections are not altogether new to me, they deserve the most serious consideration. But you must not talk any more now, Harriet, you are too weak."

It was not long before the penitent sufferer slept in the sleep of death, and her predictions began to be fulfilled. Roland's derangement had become so alarming that it had been necessary to place him under the charge of a keeper; but no sooner had Catherine informed him in conciliatory tones of the decease of his first wife, than a calm came evidently over his troubled mind.

Though his love for Harriet was inextinguishable, yet he could not but feel that, under all the circumstances her removal from this world was a mercy. This reasonable conviction broke

through his darkened brain like the first beams of the morning, and was soon followed by other considerations equally just and tranquillizing. In a few weeks he was fully re-established as a rational member of society, and reconciled himself to his union with Catherine much better than any one could have expected; and, though he never really loved her, yet, by force of habit, they soon came to live together on very amicable terms.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Inveni portum : Spes et Fortuna, valete :
Sat me lusistis, ludite nunc alios."

"Go, Hope and Fortune ; I at last
Have found the happy gate and port ;
I've been your pastime for years past ;
Go now—of other men make sport."

LITTLE needs it to tell, what the reader has anticipated, that, a convenient time after Harriet's death having elapsed, Safi and Lizzy were united in the holiest of bonds.

Their matrimonial life was as happy as ever fell to the lot of any hero and heroine of romance,

and their thoughts, feelings and principles, already coincident on so wide a range of subjects, gradually underwent a process of assimilation still more complete.

It was not long after their marriage that a remarkable conjuncture of events filled their hearts with unexpected increase of delight. The mystery which hung over Safi's birth and parentage had often been to him a source of disquietude; but every attempt to penetrate it had hitherto proved unsuccessful. Though Lizzy herself had too much genuine nobility of sentiment to value her husband any the less because she did not know who was his great grandfather, yet she could not but lament, for his sake, whatever was calculated to cause him a moment's uneasiness.

Their wedding tour lay principally in Germany. Safi could not but admire the profound thought, laborious research, and daring imagination which distinguishes so many German writers, and he wished to become better acquainted with a people so eminently philoso-

phical, who as critics, linguists, philologists, and antiquarians, stand altogether without rival.

Among the numerous states and provinces, of very unequal magnitude, which form the Germanic Confederation, rises the little principality which, in order not to be too exact, shall here be called that of Thuringerwald. The government of this State is monarchical and absolute, and its sovereign has a seat and voice in the general assemblies of the Diet, and furnishes, in time of war, a contingent of two hundred men. The number of inhabitants subject to his sway, does not exceed twenty-six thousand, and from them he derives a revenue of something less than £5,000 a year. The country is woody and mountainous, affording the Prince and his companions ample scope for the pleasures of the chase. By the help of extensive domains in Bohemia, inherited from his fathers, the Prince of Thuringerwald contrived, during a part of the year, to hold a court at Kotzebuhe, his capital, with a degree of splendour which

excited the envy of many less fortunate German Princes.

When Safi and his bride had arrived in Kotzebuhe, one of their first impulses was to ascend by a long, winding staircase, the lofty tower of the Gothic Town Hall, and take a bird's-eye view of the city and its environs.

The scene which burst upon them was like Dreamland. They were in the midst of a plain surrounded by mountains, whose slopes were adorned with woods, and whose summits were crowned with pines. Between the plain and the foot of the hills ran a river, like liquid silver, in an irregular circle, embracing in its shining belt almost the whole of the enchanting valley. Gardens and vineyards, orchards and pastures luxuriantly fertile, lay basking in the sunshine, surrounded by the watery enclosure. Within this wide circumference of grandeur and beauty there was an inner circuit no less admirable and unique, comprising the fair city, with the palace, pleasure grounds, and forest of the reigning Prince. The palace rose in the centre of the circle, one

half of which, towards the west, was occupied by the streets and squares of Kotzebuhe, while the eastern semi-circle was devoted entirely to the Prince's gardens, groves, park and woods. The streets were broad, and well built, with great regularity, under the direction of public ædiles, and converged in symmetrical *radii*, like the spokes of a wheel, towards the *Grande Place* in front of the palace. The avenues of the forest, in like manner, ran straight from the periphery, and, at equal distances, opened upon the flowery and fragrant precincts of the sovereign's abode. Rarely had the labours of art and the charms of nature, combined in producing so magical an effect. Antlered deer were imbibing cool draughts from crystal serpentine in the park; peacocks and pheasants from distant climes were emulously flaunting in bright and starry plumage, and camels, tended by negroes, in oriental costume, were pacing along the sparkling gravel walks.

The happy bride and bridegroom had not been long at Kotzebuhe before they received a

card of invitation to a ball at the palace, as coming under the category of foreigners of distinction.

When the proper moment had arrived, they were ushered into the thronged and brilliant saloon, and presented, by a chamberlain, to the prince. His Highness seemed to be struck by Safi's appearance and bearing; and as to Lizzy — English beauty, in maiden, bride, or matron, never failed to find favour in his eyes.

Other guests were waiting for presentation. Safi passed on, proud, honestly, and nobly proud of the radiant and lovely creature, who, in the full blossom of womanhood, hung upon his arm.

After a little while the prince returned to Safi, placed him beside himself on a sofa, and drew him into conversation on the affairs of Italy, in which he took, or affected to take great interest. By this means he succeeded in eliciting from the young patriot many incidental notices of his studies, travels, friends, and adventures, and was thus enabled to identify

him, beyond the shadow of a doubt, with one who had been often in his thoughts. He was charmed and riveted by Safi's fluency of diction, accurate knowledge, and unaffected eloquence, by the moderation of his views, the nobility of his sentiments, and the modest firmness with which he expressed his opinions.

"You are an *Italianissimo*, then," said the prince, smiling, "not a Mazzinist?"

"Precisely," answered Safi. "I hold the doctrines and schemes of Joseph Mazzini in the utmost abhorrence. '*Odi et arceo*.' His watchword—'*Iddio ed il popolo*'—means nothing more nor less than this—Democracy built upon the ruins of religion. Assassination, which is the basest of crimes, he extols as a virtue. I would rather see Italy suffering all the rigours of the old *regime*, than governed by infidel Socialists, whom I regard as demons incarnate. Of all the enemies of liberty they are the most deadly: of all tyrants they are the most cruel. They would not only corrupt society with the principles of Voltaire and

Ffederic II., but also disorganize and anarchize it to an extent which even those apostles of scepticism never advocated or proposed."

While this colloquy was going on between Safi and the prince, the appearance and manners of the former had attracted the attention, and excited the whisperings of almost all the company. The same observation was on every tongue—"What a striking likeness! How closely he resembles his highness in features and mien! But for a certain disparity of age, each one would seem to be a duplication of the other. Their eyes, their lips, their brows nostrils, smiles, joints, and limbs appear set in motion by a main-spring common to them both."

Again the prince mingled with the festive throng. He danced with many fair ladies, of whom the fairest and most fascinating was Safi's bride. When the moment was come at which he was accustomed to retire from the ball room, he sent a messenger to Safi desiring his presence in an adjoining boudoir.

As soon as the favoured guest entered the room, the prince fell on his neck, and embracing him affectionately, said :

“ Welcome, my son, welcome to a father’s arms. Hitherto you have not known your father, but you know him now. I am he. I rejoice to own you as mine; and I bless Heaven for having given me such a son. Sit down, and I will tell you all.”

Safi was too much astonished to make any reply, and the prince continued:—

“ When I was about eighteen, I travelled in Italy accompanied by one gentleman only and a valet. I preserved a strict incognito, and passed by the name of the Chevalier Stoleberg. My grandfather was then Prince of Thuringerwald, and I was heir to the principality, my father being dead. At Milan we lodged in the house of a Milanese merchant, who lived close to the cathedral. He had a beautiful daughter, quiet and deep—like a calm lake. She was five years older than myself. That is what boys love: their hearts look upward. They aspire to

some one more highly developed than themselves. They feel flattered by a woman's affection. Marianna's parents were anxious to marry her, and perceiving that I was very inflammable, they took care to add fuel to my flame. I became daily more enamoured, compromised, and embarrassed. I felt as though I never could love any one but Marianna, yet I knew that my guardians would never consent to a morganatic marriage, especially with the daughter of a *bourgeois*. My companion and governor, Baron Graberghe, advised me to leave Milan, but soon yielded to my resolution to remain there longer. He was a cunning, plausible, and double-faced miscreant, who in everything he did had an eye to his own interest and enjoyments, yet by his very duplicity often defeated his own ends. In the correspondence which he carried on with my mother, and grandfather, he affected the deepest solicitude for the regularity of my conduct, while, at the same time, he endeavoured to ingratiate himself with me, by pandering to my caprices. He

expected I should reward him when I inherited the Principality, but he was mistaken. I knew how much he was worth. I despised him, and used him as a tool.

“ With this man’s connivance, I proposed to marry Marianna, but under my assumed name, as the Chevalier Stoleberg. By his dextrous co-operation, the matter was easily arranged, and the marriage solemnized. I feel ashamed to avow this act of deceit; but I was too young and giddy to be fully sensible of the gravity of my fault, I had no good advisers, and I was passionately in love. These are my excuses. I know they are insufficient. Your beloved mother alone was guiltless in this affair. I took her from place to place where no one knew me, and she never learned that I had deceived her, though she may sometimes have suspected that all was not quite right. In fifteen months after our marriage, Marianna died in my arms. Sweet Marianna! She was my first and fondest love; and what is second love compared with first? It is as the gathering of grapes when

the vintage is ended; as the gleanings of corn when the harvest is past. First love is real love; second love is only a feeble imitation. Your dear mother is buried at Palermo, where you first saw the light. Your infancy was passed at Messina. Though I have not seen you from the time when I sailed from Sicily with a sad heart till this day, I have never failed to watch over you from afar with paternal care, to provide for your education and supply your need. Accident, or the will of Heaven, has brought you hither, and here, if you will, you shall remain. I will find some post suited to your talents, and you can spend your winters in your beloved Italy. I daresay you are disappointed to find that the blood which flows in your veins is Italian only by your mother's side. You must learn to love Germany the more, without loving Italy the less. I will explain to those who are near to me the circumstances of your birth. I will accuse myself. I will exculpate your innocent mother. I have married twice since her death, and have many sons and

daughters. I hope they will all treat you as a brother; but if it should be otherwise—for some of them persist in thinking it a very fine thing to be proud—their little haughty airs and petty jealousies will, I have no doubt, be shortly subdued and overcome by your wisdom, and your wife's sweetness of disposition. Now bring her to me, that I may embrace her as my daughter. I see she is an angel. I read the heart in the face."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Me, me, adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum."

"The author of the ill, lo, I am he!

Turn, turn the avenging weapon against me."

Virgil's Æneid.

NEAR the Cathedral Church of Notre Dame in Paris stands the hospital called the Hôtel Dieu. On certain days its doors are thrown open to the public, and those who will are permitted to walk through the spacious chambers, visit their sick friends and relatives, and inspect the general arrangements. It happened that, on one of these occasions, Roland Elsmere, who still continued to reside in Paris, was passing by the hospital, and

seeing so many persons going in and coming out, was induced by curiosity to follow the stream, and see whatever there might be to interest him within.

Not far from the entrance, in the first ward, a number of Sisters of Charity, who lived in the hospital that they might minister to the sick night and day, were sitting round a large table, preparing bandages, garments, and other necessary articles for the patients; and here, and there, as Roland advanced further, he observed a sister of the same order seated by a sick bed, administering medicines, or reading some book of piety to the sufferers, or kneeling by their side in prayer.

The Sisters of Charity, however, were not the only attendants who seemed to be tenderly concerned for the inmates of the Hôtel Dieu. In the second male ward a placid and benevolent looking priest was earnestly addressing a young man whose face was half concealed by the folds of the quilt, and who, from the deep groans and frequent shrieks which he uttered, appeared to

be enduring extreme agony. The clergyman looked up as Roland approached, and their glances met. They recognised each other immediately, and, moving forwards, cordially shook hands. It was the Abbé Lagier, the Curé of St. Sauveur, whose sermon and conversation had, on a former occasion, made so deep an impression on Roland's mind.

"I did not know, Monsieur le Curé," he said, "that your duties brought you so far as the Hôtel Dieu."

"One of the hospital chaplains, who is my friend," replied the Abbé, "being ill, I am come here to-day merely to supply his place. This poor creature, to whom I have been speaking, has attempted to commit suicide by throwing himself into the Seine. He was rescued in time to prevent death by drowning, but the surgeons consider his case hopeless; he is dying of a blow in the side received while in the water."

"Roland!" said the patient, in a low and agitated voice, while he uncovered his face, "Roland Elsmere! Do you know me?"

Roland was much startled at hearing himself addressed so familiarly; but a moment sufficed to identify the countenance of the suicide with that of the bitterest enemy of his peace—Walter Dunraven!

“Wretched man!” he answered, “I know you too well. Would to God that I had never known you, never trusted you, never welcomed you to my home, and counted you as chief among my friends. Miserable and abandoned traitor! you have been the author of all my miseries. What has brought you to this end?”

Dunraven had buried his face in the pillow while Roland was thus reproaching him, for he was writhing with bodily agony, and at the same time was overwhelmed with confusion and shame. At Roland’s interrogation he slightly raised his head, and replied, “remorse and ruin, twins born of crime!”

“What caused your ruin?”

“Sin has ruined my soul, suicide my body, and gambling my estate.”

“Did you think to escape from ruin by throwing yourself into the Seine?”

"I thought I might perhaps escape from myself. Earthly existence, at all events, was too wretched to be endured any longer; and how could I be certain that it would be succeeded by any other? Besides, I had no means of subsistence; I was beggared and in debt . . . Oh, my side, my side! The ribs, staved in and splintered, seem to be goring my lungs. . . . How long will it take to die? How long? How long?"

His speech became more and more inarticulate; yet he continued, at intervals, to pour forth the anguish of his spirit in these bitter and remorseful strains:

"My hands are covered with blood, with my own blood, and Harriet's blood (for who but I was the cause of her premature decay and decease,) and with yours, Roland, yes, with yours also."

"What!" exclaimed Roland, "is it possible that you were the assassin who attempted my life on the road between the Railway Station and St. Amand?"

"I was the dark ruffian who waylaid you. It

was I whom you saw drinking by the fire at the inn *Au Bon Repos*. It was I who fired at you three times, and pulled the trigger a fourth. I was drunk, Roland. I was mad. I was possessed of two demons—jealousy and drink. I had lost the power of resisting criminal impulses. I was the slave and tool of passion. . . . Oh, the tortures I endure! I know not which are the greatest, those of the body or of the mind.”

“Do you repent of the crimes you have committed against God and man?” inquired Roland.

“Yes, I repent as Cain, Esau, Ahitophel, and Judas repented. No otherwise, I fear.”

“Rather, my friend,” said the Curé, “repent like David, Manasseh, Mary Magdalen, and the Publican, who smote upon his breast, crying, God be merciful to me a sinner!”

“How can I repent?” said Dunraven, groaning deeply. “It is too late; too late. I cannot collect my thoughts in the midst of these torments. . . . The hour of death is not the time for repentance. It is all that I can do to bear up against the pain that is slaughtering me.”

"Is he a Catholic now, Monsieur le Curé, or a —?"

Roland would have added "Protestant," but Dunraven interrupted him, saying:

"Neither—both—anything—nothing. I am a sinner, a seducer, a perfidious friend, a cruel enemy, a murderer, and a suicide. I am unworthy to live, and unfit to die. . . . The icy fingers of death touch my heart. Thick darkness gathers round me. My eyes grow dim. My breath fails. . . . Devils are awaiting me; I see them in the distance; they approach; they clutch me; I cannot keep them off. . . . Can you forgive, Roland? can you forgive *me*? There," he added, unfastening a locket which had been suspended round his neck, and offering it to Roland, "take this; I have no right to possess it, nor ever had. It contains a lock of Harriet's hair. And she is mouldering in the grave—my sweet and lovely victim! Take it, Roland; it is yours. I have robbed you of that, and far more. I have plundered you of the fairest treasure a man ever prized. Unlawful

affection was the beginning of my perdition, the root of all my crimes. . . . If God is good, why did he allow me to ruin myself? He could have prevented it. Mad sophistry! I was a free agent, the fault is my own. . . . Take away the locket, Roland; it would hang round my neck like a mill-stone. . . . Can you, I ask again, can you forgive me?"

The locket dropped on the bed. Roland looked at it with tenderest interest; for Harriet's memory was dear to him, in spite of all that had happened; but he scorned to handle a *souvenir* that had been profaned and polluted by the touch of her seducer. To the earnest question, however, of the dying man, he replied, saying:

"My forgiveness could avail you little; seek pardon from God."

"Remember, my friend," said the Curé, "that despair of God's mercy is the last and greatest of sins, the only sin that is unpardonable. There is still hope for you through him whom this image represents."

While he thus spoke, he took from his bosom

an ivory crucifix, and held it with one hand before the eyes of the dying criminal, while with the other he pointed upward towards the throne of the invisible Redeemer. He then fell on his knees at the bedside, and exhorted Dunraven to recite after him a prayer addressed to the merciful Son of God.

It was a solemn moment. An undying spirit was hovering on the frontiers of that world, the secrets of which none have ever returned to reveal. It was an awful moment. A sinner, self-convicted of the darkest crimes, was about to be hurried to the bar of that dread tribunal, from which there could be no appeal; and who would plead for him there? An unprepared mortal was shuddering prematurely on the chill brink of the river of death: what bridge could be thrown across the gloomy flood, which would land him safely on the opposing banks? An immortal soul was speedily to be launched on the vast and dim ocean of an untried futurity; what benignant star would arise on its darkness? what skilful pilot would conduct it safely to the shores

of reconciliation and peace? Innumerable unseen intelligences, good and evil, were watching the issue of that momentous and terrible crisis, ready and eager to escort the disembodied spirit to the paradise prepared for the penitent, or to the fathomless abyss of hopeless ruin and never-ending woe.

Walter Dunraven looked at the crucifix rather vacantly and very sorrowfully. The Curé began the prayer; but, alas, it was now too late for Dunraven to join in the recitation. Cold and clammy death-dews stood thickly on his brows; and his face was ghastly pale; his limbs became chill and torpid; a film of mist spread over his eyes; his pulse scarce beat; his lungs scarce breathed; his throat rattled, his head drooped; his chest collapsed; the flickering lamp of life flared for an instant, and then sank down into its socket, and was extinguished for ever.

A solemn pause ensued, and silence, which Roland was the first to break.

"Can you, Monsieur le Curé," he asked, "entertain any hopes of his salvation?"

“Undoubtedly I can,” was the reply; “there is but one human being of whom we know for certain that he is lost; and that only because the Scriptures have revealed the fact.* When Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, one glance at that divinely-appointed symbol sufficed to heal any of the plague-stricken people of Israel; and so let us hope that when this unhappy malefactor glanced at the image of the crucified Saviour, his soul looked with faith and repentance on the sacrifice of the cross, and by its infinite merits and virtue was absolved from all vices and imperfections, and perfectly healed. One sigh of real contrition unbars the gates of Paradise. One tear of true penitence extinguishes all the flames of Hell.”

* Acts i. 25.

THE END.







